NOV.

DOUBLE-ACTION WESTERN

25¢

ANC

Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

OWLHOOTER'S RECRUIT
by Ruel McDaniel

ALL NEW STORIES

SECRET OF THE BADLANDS
Feature Rangeland Novel
by G. W. BARRINGTON

THE GOLD PLOWS
by A. A. Baker

NEW AMAZING POWERHOUSE BINOCULARS FROM GERMANY GIVE YOU UP TO 20 MILE RANGE!

9X Area Magnification!

DIRECT FROM IMPORTER TO YOU

$4.98 WITH CASE • F.T.I.

THIS is what your eye sees ▶

◀ THIS is what you see with the **POWER-HOUSE**

Get more FUN from life!
Enjoy BASEBALL, all sports!
Distant views up to 20 miles!

THORESEN—world's greatest importer of German binoculars—brings you famous, nationally advertised POWERHOUSE BINOCULARS FOR ONLY 4.98! NOT 4 . . . 5 . . . 7—but 9X AREA MAGNIFICATION! The POWERHOUSE is made in Western Germany—world's outstanding producer of quality optics—and German know-how and superb workmanship are reflected in its many features!

Costly, Precision-Ground Lenses!

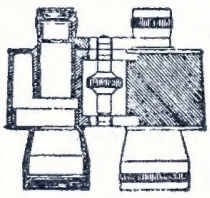
POWERHOUSE is manufactured by a 99-year-old firm—the powerful lenses in these glasses are its crowning achievement! NOT moulded plastic kind stamped out by the million . . . Each lens is ground & polished to high tolerances, then checked for accuracy. This takes much longer, costs 20 to 30 times more! BUT—you get CRYSTAL-CLEAR VIEWING—no excessive distortion or ghost images! Other POWERHOUSE features: Great structural strength without tiring weight. (Only 9½ oz.) . . . Aluminum center-post focusing for steady focusing . . . Beautiful modern design . . . High luminosity for viewing even by moonlight.

Satisfaction Guaranteed! 5 Day Free Trial!

One look thru the POWERHOUSE will convince you of its superb quality! That's why we want to send one to you on FREE TRIAL for 5 days. Use it to watch baseball—at the races—on vacation trips—for bird & plane spotting! Then—if you don't think it's a TERRIFIC bargain—return it for FULL REFUND! Only about 100,000 POWERHOUSES can be produced this year, due to high manufacturing standards. To be fair to all, we are forced to limit sales to ONE per reader. Send coupon TODAY and be sure of getting YOUR POWERHOUSE!

THORESEN'S, Dept. 120-M-6
352 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y.

Canadian: order direct—no tariff
Thoresen Co., Dept. 120-M-6 45 James St., W, Montreal 1, P. Q.



CROSS-SECTION VIEW SHOWS YOU SUPER FEATURES

1. **Rugged "Battleship" Construction.**
2. **Lenses are deep-bedded for extra protection.**
3. **Note how light is channelled for super viewing.**
4. **Center focusing gives you 25 possible positions.**

RUSH FOR FREE TRIAL!

THORESEN'S, Dept. 120-M-6
352 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y.

RUSH 1 POWERHOUSE with case at 4.98 on 5 Day FREE TRIAL. Money-back Guarantee.

☐ 4.98 enclosed. Send all charges prepaid.
☐ Send C.O.D. plus postal charges.

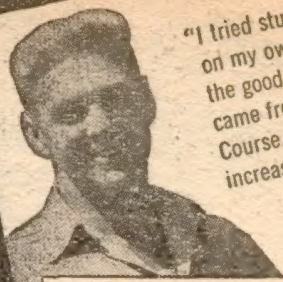
Name .....

Address .....

Town ..... State.....

ARE YOU TOO OLD TO LEARN?

not at all, scientists say



"I tried studying my work on my own, but I never got the good out of it that came from my I. C. S. Course. My salary has been increased 73.3%!"
E.L.B.
Ohio

New tests show that: your ability to think increases with age; your powers of deduction are greater; your judgment is better.

In the I. C. S. files are thousands of cases of men and women of every age. Their successes, their promotions, their raises prove that men and women past school age can learn!

I.C.S. GIVES YOU EXPERT GUIDANCE FREE! Do you have the feeling you're "stuck" in your job? Your trained I. C. S. counselor will appraise your abilities, help you plan for the future.

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO GET STARTED! You study with I. C. S. at home, in your spare time. There's no interference with business or social activity. Famous I. C. S. texts make learning easy. Don't delay. Pick your field from the coupon below. And mail it today!

"I am president of a small corporation. A year ago I enrolled with I. C. S. as the most practical means available to me to learn what I needed."
W.J.A.
Michigan

"It's been so long since I went to school, I've forgotten much. But now that I'm taking an I. C. S. Course, I have confidence in my ability again."
H.A.R.
New Jersey

Actual statements. Posed by models.

3 FREE BOOKS

36-page, pocket-size guide to advancement, a gold mine of tips on "How to Succeed." Big catalog outlining opportunities in your field of interest. Also free sample I. C. S. lesson.

For Real Job Security—Get an I. C. S. Diploma!

I. C. S., Scranton 9, Penna.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

ICS

BOX 6015-E, SCRANTON 9, PENNA.

(Partial list of 277 courses)

Without cost or obligation, send me "HOW to SUCCEED" and the opportunity booklet about the field BEFORE which I have marked X (plus sample lesson):

ARCHITECTURE and BUILDING CONSTRUCTION
- ☐ Air Conditioning—Refrig.
- ☐ Architecture
- ☐ Building Contractor
- ☐ Building Maintenance
- ☐ Carpenter and Mill Work
- ☐ Estimating
- ☐ Heating
- ☐ Painting Contractor
- ☐ Plumbing
- ☐ Reading Arch. Blueprints
- ☐ Steamfitting

ART
- ☐ Cartooning
- ☐ Commercial Art
- ☐ Fashion Illustrating
- ☐ Magazine Illustrating
- ☐ Show Card and Sign Lettering
- ☐ Sketching and Painting

AUTOMOTIVE
- ☐ Auto Body Rebuilding
- ☐ Auto Elec. Technician
- ☐ Auto-Engine Tune Up
- ☐ Automobile Mechanic

AVIATION
- ☐ Aeronautical Engineering Jr.
- ☐ Aircraft & Engine Mechanic

BUSINESS
- ☐ Advertising
- ☐ Bookkeeping and Accounting
- ☐ Business Administration
- ☐ Business Correspondence
- ☐ Certified Public Accounting
- ☐ Creative Salesmanship
- ☐ Federal Tax
- ☐ Letter-writing Improvement
- ☐ Managing Small Business
- ☐ Office Management
- ☐ Retail Business Management
- ☐ Sales Management
- ☐ Stenographic-Secretarial
- ☐ Traffic Management

CHEMISTRY
- ☐ Analytical Chemistry
- ☐ Chemical Engineering
- ☐ Chem. Lab. Technician
- ☐ General Chemistry
- ☐ Natural Gas Prod. & Trans.
- ☐ Petroleum Engineering
- ☐ Plastics
- ☐ Pulp and Paper Making

CIVIL, STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING
- ☐ Civil Engineering
- ☐ Construction Engineering
- ☐ Highway Engineering
- ☐ Reading Struct. Blueprints
- ☐ Sanitary Engineering
- ☐ Structural Engineering
- ☐ Surveying and Mapping

DRAFTING
- ☐ Aircraft Drafting
- ☐ Architectural Drafting
- ☐ Electrical Drafting
- ☐ Mechanical Drafting
- ☐ Mine Surveying and Mapping
- ☐ Ship Drafting
- ☐ Structural Drafting

ELECTRICAL
- ☐ Electrical Engineering
- ☐ Electrical Maintenance
- ☐ Electrician ☐ Contracting
- ☐ Lineman

HIGH SCHOOL
- ☐ Commercial
- ☐ Good English
- ☐ High School Subjects
- ☐ Mathematics

LEADERSHIP
- ☐ Foremanship
- ☐ Industrial Supervision
- ☐ Leadership and Organization
- ☐ Personnel-Labor Relations

MECHANICAL AND SHOP
- ☐ Gas—Electric Welding
- ☐ Heat Treatment ☐ Metallurgy
- ☐ Industrial Engineering
- ☐ Industrial Instrumentation
- ☐ Industrial Supervision
- ☐ Machine Design-Drafting
- ☐ Machine Shop Inspection
- ☐ Machine Shop Practice
- ☐ Mechanical Engineering
- ☐ Quality Control
- ☐ Reading Shop Blueprints
- ☐ Refrigeration
- ☐ Sheet Metal Worker
- ☐ Tool Design ☐ Toolmaking

RADIO, TELEVISION
- ☐ Electronics
- ☐ Practical Radio—TV Eng'r'ng
- ☐ Radio and TV Servicing
- ☐ Radio Operating
- ☐ Television—Technician

RAILROAD
- ☐ Air Brakes ☐ Car Inspector
- ☐ Diesel Locomotive
- ☐ Locomotive Engineer
- ☐ Section Foreman

STEAM AND DIESEL POWER
- ☐ Combustion Engineering
- ☐ Diesel—Elec. ☐ Diesel Eng'r's
- ☐ Electric Light and Power
- ☐ Stationary Fireman
- ☐ Stationary Steam Engineering

TEXTILE
- ☐ Carding and Spinning
- ☐ Cotton, Rayon, Woolen Mfg.
- ☐ Finishing and Dyeing
- ☐ Loom Fixing
- ☐ Textile Designing
- ☐ Textile Eng'r'g ☐ Throwing
- ☐ Warping and Weaving

MISCELLANEOUS
- ☐ Domestic Refrigeration
- ☐ Marine Engineering
- ☐ Ocean Navigation
- ☐ Shipfitting
- ☐ Short Story Writing
- ☐ Telephony

Name_____ Age_____ Home Address_____

City_____ Zone_____ State_____ Working Hours_____ A.M. to P.M._____

Occupation_____

Canadian residents send coupon to International Correspondence Schools, Canadian, Ltd., Montreal, Canada. . . . Special tuition rates to members of the U. S. Armed Forces.

ALL STORIES BRAND NEW

DOUBLE-ACTION WESTERN

Volume 22 November, 1954 Number 2

Thrilling Rangeland Novel

Secret of the Badlands

by G .W. Barrington 10

The mystery was: why did the rustlers around Sandstone Junction seem to like Jim Randall's stock best of all? Or was there another reason why his cows were hazed off more frequently than anyone else's?

Short Stories and Features

THE TRADING POST 6
White Eagle tells about "Green River Mountain Men".

BOOK REVIEW 55
J. D. Simons discusses A. Hyatt Verrill's, "The Real Americans".

THE GOLD PLOWS ..... A. A. Baker 56
Part of the way to get revenge was to outswindle these crooks.

DIG HIM NO GRAVE ..... Tod Harding 66
There was one infallible way of proving Quinn's guilt...

LAWMAN'S DOUBLE-DEAL ..... Zachary Strong 75
Who'd believe that the lawman hadn't killed out of personal hatred?

Next Issue on Sale November 1st

Robert W. Lowndes, Editor

DOUBLE ACTION WESTERN, November, 1954, published bi-monthly by COLUMBIA PUBLICATIONS, INC., 1 Appleton St., Holyoke, Mass. Editorial and executive offices, 241 Church St., New York 13, N. Y. Entered as second class matter at the post office at Holyoke, Mass. Entire contents copyright 1954 by Columbia Publications, Inc. Single copy 25¢; yearly subscription $1.50. When submitting manuscripts, enclose stamped, self-addressed envelope for their return if found unavailable for acceptance. The publishers will exercise care in the handling of unsolicited manuscripts, but assume no responsibility for their return. Title registered in U. S. Patent Office. Printed in the U. S. A.

You Practice SERVICING with Kits I Send You

Nothing takes the place of PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE. That's why NRI training is based on LEARNING BY DOING. You use parts I send to build many circuits common to Radio and Television. With my Servicing Course you build the modern Radio shown at left. You build a Multitester and use it to help make $10, $15 a week fixing sets in spare time while training. All equipment is yours to keep. Coupon below will bring book of important facts. It shows other equipment you build.

You Practice BROADCASTING with Kits I Send You

As part of my Communications Course I send you parts to build low-power Broadcasting Transmitter at left. Use it to get practical experience. You put this station "on the air" . . . perform procedures demanded of broadcasting station operators. An FCC Commercial Operator's License can be your ticket to a bright future. My Communications Course trains you to get your license. Mail coupon Book shows other equipment you build for practical experience.

I Will Train You at Home in Spare Time to be a RADIO-TELEVISION Technician

TELEVISION

Making Jobs, Prosperity

25 million homes have Television sets now. Thousands more sold every week. Trained men needed to make, install, service TV sets. About 200 television stations on the air. Hundreds more being built. Good job opportunities here for qualified technicians, operators, etc.

J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute
Washington, D. C.

Our 40th Year

America's Fast Growing Industry Offers You Good Pay, Success

Training PLUS opportunity is the PERFECT COMBINATION for job security, advancement. When times are good, the trained man makes the BETTER PAY, gets PROMOTED. When jobs are scarce, the trained man enjoys GREATER SECURITY. NRI training can help assure you and your family more of the better things of life. Radio is bigger than ever with over 3,000 broadcasting stations and more than 115 MILLION sets in use, and Television is moving ahead fast.

N.R.I. Training Leads to Good Jobs Like These

I TRAINED THESE MEN

"Am transmitter-studio operator at KPAT. Most important day of my life was when I enrolled with NRI."—Elmer Frewaldt, Madison, S. Dakota.

"Made my first $100 from spare time work before I finished my course. Now I average better than $10 a week, spare time."—Frank Borer, Lorain, Ohio.

"I've come a long way in Radio and Television since graduating. Have my own business on Main Street."—Joe Travers, Asbury Park, New Jersey.

"I didn't know a thing about Radio. Now have a good job as Studio Engineer at KMMJ."—Bill Delzell, Central City, Nebraska.

BROADCASTING: Chief Technician, Chief Operator, Power Monitor, Recording Operator, Remote Control Operator. SERVICING: Home and Auto Radios, Television Receivers, FM Radios, P.A. Systems. IN RADIO PLANTS: Design Assistant, Technician, Tester, Serviceman, Service Manager. SHIP AND HARBOR RADIO: Chief Operator, Radio-Telephone Operator. GOVERNMENT RADIO: Operator in Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Forestry Service Dispatcher, Airways Radio Operator. AVIATION RADIO: Transmitter Technician, Receiver Technician, Airport Transmitter Operator. TELEVISION: Pick-up Operator, Television Technician, Remote Control Operator.

Start Soon to Make $10, $15 a Week Extra Fixing Sets

My training is practical, complete; is backed by 40 years of success training men at home. My well-illustrated lessons give you basic principles you need and my skillfully developed kits of parts "bring to life" things you learn from the lessons. I start sending you special booklets that show you how to fix sets the day you enroll. Multitester you build with my parts helps you discover and correct set troubles, helps you make money fixing neighbors' sets in spare time while training. Many make $10, $15 a week extra this way.

Mail Coupon — Find Out What Radio-Television Offer You

Act now to get more of the good things of life. I send actual lesson to prove NRI home training is practical, thorough. My 64-page book "How to be a Success in Radio-Television" shows what my graduates are doing and earning. It gives important facts about your opportunities in Radio-Television. Take NRI training for as little as $5 a month. Many graduates make more than the total cost of my training in two weeks. Mail coupon now to: J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 4MT National Radio Institute, Washington 9, D. C. Our 40th year.

AVAILABLE to all qualified VETERANS UNDER G.I. BILLS

Good for Both—FREE

MR. J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 4MT
National Radio Institute, Washington 9, D. C.
Mail me Sample Lesson and 64-page Book, FREE.
(No salesman will call! Please write plainly.)

Name.....Age.....

Address.....

City.....Zone....State.....

VETS write in date of discharge.....

Mail Today-Tested Way to Better Pay

THE TRADING POST

A DEPARTMENT of TRUE STORIES

Green River Mountain Men

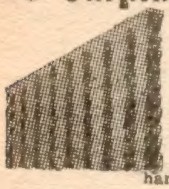
by White Eagle

A PROSPEROUS thriving metropolis of some four thousand people today, Green River is still the gathering place for many of the old timers yet living. But in 1840, and for many many years thereafter, it was nothing but wild, untamed open country traveled only by hunters, trappers, prospectors and hostile Indians. It was not until 1846, when one Frances Bovey—trader and adventurer—stopped to water his tired oxen and mule teams, that the life of Green River was started. Looking over the surrounding country, Bovey decided that this particular spot was as good as any to build a Trading Post. Reason for his decision was also the fact that he had noticed considerable trav-

[*Turn To Page* 8]

COMPLETE TOOL SETS AT THE PRICE OF A SINGLE TOOL!

46 Surplus Twist DRILLS $2

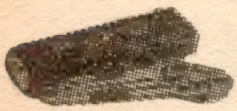


Less than 4½c each. For hand or electric drills. Brand new, genuine hi-grade, hardened carbon tool steel drills. Sell for up to $6 in the stores. You get about 5 each of the most frequently used sizes from 1/16" to ¼". Tempered cutting edges easily bite through steel, aluminum, iron, wood, or plastic. Each drill designed and hardened to give 1800 drillings.

$2 *complete set postpaid*

3 pc. ADJUSTABLE WRENCH SET

Fine quality imported German steel. Nose of highly polished malleable steel. Handle is channeled for sure grip. 6", 8", and 10" wrench is mounted in a steel clip with thumbscrew for quick removal or replacement of wrenches.



$2.98 *complete set postpaid*

4 pc. CHISEL SET in PLASTIC CASE

Tang Chisels, Swedish pattern, drop forged from high quality tool steel, tempered and hardened, beveled and polished blades. Straight hardwood handles, leather tipped. Set contains one each ¼, ½, ¾, and 1" chisel, in separate transparent compartments of strong plastic kit with yellow binding.

$2.98 *complete set postpaid*

6 pc. MAGNETIZED SCREW DRIVER SET

Plastic, insulated handles, scientifically designed for non-slip grip. Blades are of highly polished, hardened and tempered quality tool steel.

1—Cabinet ⅛ x 3⅛" 1—Mechanic ¼ x 6"
1—Cabinet ³⁄₁₆ x 5" 1—Heavy Duty ⅜ x 8"
1—Stubby ¼ x 1½" 1—Recess (#2) ¼ x 4"

$1.49 *complete set postpaid*

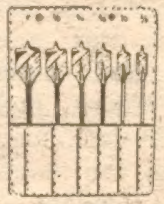
3 pc. PLIER SET

Finest drop forged imported steel. Ground and polished heads, polished finish, and knurled handles for easier grip. Individually pocketed in heat sealed plastic kit.

1—Linesman Slip Joint, 7"
1—Long Nose, 6¾"
1—Diagonal, 6¾"

$2.98 *complete set postpaid*

6 pc. AUGER BIT SET



Made of finest tool steel specially tempered and hardened to give years of quick, clean, easy drilling. Shanks will fit all electric drills. Packed in sturdy, heat-treated, compartmented plastic tool roll. Sizes: ⅜", ½", ⅝", ¾", ⅞" and 1".

$2.29 *complete set postpaid*

SURPLUS BARGAINS

DRILL STAND

Rust proof, cadmium plated, will hold 21 Jobber or Letter Drills. Stands upright on shelf or bench. Drill sizes plainly marked on each opening. Sized by 64ths from ³⁄₆₄" to ⅜"

$.49 *postpaid*

STEEL TAPE MEASURE WITH SPRING RETURN

Six feet long, ⅝" wide concave spring steel tape, highly polished with etched figures. Catch hook at end. Nickel plated steel case. Graduated to ¹⁄₁₆" with easy, accurate readings. Positive spring return.

$.39 *postpaid*

WHITE WOOD FOLDING RULES

Made of well seasoned lumber with metal tipped ends and spring joints. Markings are sharp and clear, graduated in 16ths. 6 foot lengths.

$.49 *postpaid*

6 pc. METAL CUTTING FILE SET

Made from the best quality tool steel, designed for the requirements of mechanics, instrument watch and jewelry craftsmen. Compartmented plastic kit contains the following 5½" long needle files with round shanks and high test cutting qualities: round, half-round, flat, oval, knife, square.

$.98 *complete set postpaid*

MONEY BACK IF YOU DON'T AGREE THESE ARE THE BEST TOOL VALUES EVER!

SEND CHECK, CASH, OR MONEY ORDER AND WE PAY THE POSTAGE . . . IF C.O.D. POSTAGE IS EXTRA!

USE THE ATTACHED COUPON FOR IMMEDIATE DELIVERY!

SCOTT-MITCHELL HOUSE, 611 BROADWAY, DEPT. HH4, NEW YORK 12, N.Y.

Please send me the following items as indicated:

___46 DRILLS @ $2.00 per set
___DRILL STAND @ 49¢ ea.
___FOLDING RULE @ 49¢ ea.
___STEEL TAPE MEASURE @ 39¢ ea.
___6 pc. METAL CUTTING FILE SET @ 98¢ per set
___3 pc. ADJUSTABLE WRENCH SET @ $2.98 per set
___6 pc MAGNETIZED SCREW DRIVER SET @ $1.49 per set
___4 pc. CHISEL SET IN PLASTIC CASE @ $2.98 per set
___3 pc. PLIER SET IN PLASTIC CASE @ $2.98 per set
___6 pc. AUGER BIT SET IN PLASTIC CASE @ $2.29 per set

Enclosed find $_____ ☐ CASH ☐ CHECK ☐ MONEY ORDER

Send C.O.D. PLUS POSTAGE CHARGES

NAME_____ ADDRESS_____

CITY_____ ZONE_____ STATE_____

SCOTT-MITCHELL HOUSE, 611 BROADWAY, DEPT. HH4, NEW YORK 12, N.Y.

el along the river by hunters and trappers.

A man of action, Bovey put his three teamsters to work putting up buildings. These were later surrounded by a palisade for protection against hostile Indians. Bovey had stopped at Fort Bridger, but finding too many traders at the Fort, he had contacted Jim Bridger, the founder of the Fort who had advised Bovey to start a Post somewhere along Green River where there was considerable travel, thereby insuring a much better chance for trade with the mountain men and friendly Indians.

Bovey had taken Bridger's advice, and soon was ready for business. And business, he soon found, was good from the very beginning. Such noted mountain men as Ned Williams, Jack Perkins, Fred Dauglas—in fact, most of the well-known men of the mountains—came to do their trading at at Green River. This was due to the fact that the Bovey Post was much closer than was Fort Bridger. Bovey soon became prosperous.

Some time later, in the fall of 1848, two sportsmen from back east came to the Bovey Post armed with a letter asking that he send them to some rendezvous of mountain men, whose life and habits they wanted to study. They had, as they stated, been told that the mountain men hunted not only game to kill, but Indians as well. Bovey told them that this was far from the truth; mountain men were trappers and hunters who exploited the mountains during fall and winter months trapping and hunting fur bearing animals. But they did not, as the two Easterners had been told, go hunting for Indians to kill.

It is a fact, however, that most of them considered the killing of Indians as part of a day's work when they were in hostile territory. This they considered as being essential to their own safety, especially so when they were established in a winter's camp inside Indian territory. If they could prevent news of their presence from spreading among the tribesmen by killing the few Indians who happened to locate their camp, then they did not hesitate to do so. They did not take into consideration the fact that they had no business being in Indian territory. Specifically, this area and the Indians were under treaty with the government which protected them from outside interference. To the mountain men, however, this meant nothing at all. They continued their encroachment on Indian territory, paying little or no attention to the Indians' rights, as being justified. They wanted fur, and if they had to kill Indians to get it, they had no hesitancy about so doing.

At that time, and known to Bovey, there was a rendezvous of trappers and hunters in the Pryor mountains of southern Montana. They had spent the previous Fall trapping on various streams from Wind River in Wyoming, to Pryor creek in Montana. When the freeze-up came, twenty five of them had joined together and established a camp in a small basin where grass, water, fuel and game were abundant, and where their number made them comparatively safe from Indians. In December, five of them went to Green River for ammunition, salt and other supplies. They returned on Christmas day, and with them came the two easterners, who had been placed in their care by Bovey.

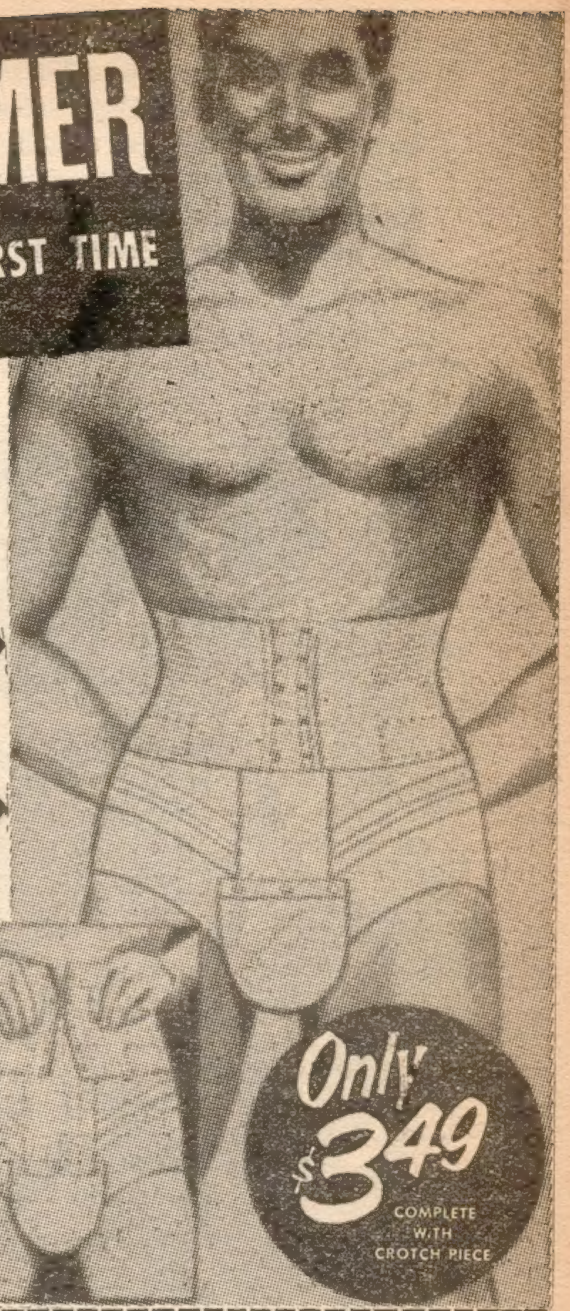
On the following night, a sweeping snowstorm blew in over the mountains that lasted for three days, leaving about twenty inches of snow on the ground. When the storm was over, Ned Williams spoke to the two visitors. "Well, reckon yo' folks will be a-wantin' fer a bit of huntin', so as Shorty Cadell done smelled out a heap of buffler and bear signs, reckon maybe we can scare up a bit of excitement fer ye'."

Five of the trappers and the two dudes saddled up for the hunt. A few

[*Turn To Page* 92]

FIGURE SLIMMER

NOW OFFERED FOR THE FIRST TIME



THE NEW FIGURE SLIMMER COMBINATION ADJUSTABLE WAIST AND ABDOMINAL LEVELER

Now reduce that waist and abdominal bulging look instantly. Figure Slimmer pushes back in the droopy bulging abdominal protuberance and lets you take in your waistline and do away with flabby midriff look instantly. Look at the picture and see how it works.

SLENDERIZES BOTH ABDOMEN AND WAIST

Figure-Slimmer corrects the faults of other garments. Some hold in the stomach but push out the waist. Figure Slimmer slenderizes both the waist and abdominal appearance at the same time. You will look inches slimmer and feel wonderful.

HOLDS BACK TOGETHER

Figure Slimmer is wonderful for that falling-apart back feeling. It's firm, gentle compressing action makes you feel good and secure and enables you to continue to do your daily work feeling less tired, less broken down. Send for Figure Slimmer now and begin enjoying a figure-slimmed appearance at once.

APPEAR INCHES SLIMMER—LOOK BETTER

Don't let a heavy weighing-down "corporation" and a balloon waistline get you down. Figure Slimmer flattens your front and takes in inches of your appearance. Clothes will look well on you now!

ADJUSTABLE

Figure Slimmer's adjustable feature makes it easy for you to have a small waistline look. Trousers now look good and fit swell. You can take yourself in more inches if you wish, with this novel adjustable feature.

TRY 10 DAYS
SEND NO MONEY

You need risk no money to try Figure Slimmer. Just fill out the coupon and we will rush you the Figure Slimmer by return mail. Wear it ten days. Then if you are not satisfied with the results you had expected return it and the full purchase price will be refunded. Mail coupon now. Only $3.49 for waist sizes up to 45. $3.98 for waist sizes 46 and up. All sizes include crotch piece.

WARD GREEN COMPANY, Dept. FM-9
43 West 61 St., N. Y. 23, N. Y.

Gentlemen:

Rush for ten days approval the new Figure Slimmer. After wearing for ten days I can return it for full refund of purchase price if not completely satisfied with results.

Check one:

☐ Send C.O.D. and I will pay postman plus postage.

☐ I enclose $3.49. Send it prepaid. ($3.98 for waist sizes 46 and up.) EXTRA crotch pieces—50¢ ea.

My waist measure is.....inches

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....ZONE.....STATE.....

Rustlers were operating all around Sandstone Junction, but they seemed to have an especial preference for Jim Randall's stock. Just where the stolen beef went was as much of a mystery as the identity of the rustlers. But Red Thurman seemed to have an idea that the rustling and the stagecoach-holdups were all tied together. And the remedy he finally proposed was that Randall and his crew should say nothing and tell no one when the next bunch of cows vanished. Just repair the fence where it was cut, and then sit tight!

SECRET OF THE BADLANDS

Feature Novel of Deadly Mystery

by G. W. Barrington

SANDSTONE JUNCTION, midway stop on the Spring Hill-Twin Creek stageline, had drowsed through the noon hour, as most of the businessmen had locked their places and gone out on home for the hot meal they seldom failed to enjoy. The two indispensibles, Doc Lockhart's dingy drugstore and the *Elite Saloon,* had remained open, both for the purpose of administering to suffering humanity. Mom Pearson and her two daughters had been busy serving dinner at the City Hotel—which, like its mistress, was drab and dreary on the outside, but in the common opinion clean and wholesome within.

Now it was near one; the merchants

were dribbling back to business by ones and twos, some of them picking up speed when a loose plank on the creek bridge over beyond the railroad snare-drummed the message that the stage was coming in on time. No one wanted to miss seeing the daily spectacle.

The saloon patrons poured out on the walk where the storekeepers already were gathering; others seemed to come from nowhere. Sandstone Junction was wide awake now, and on tiptoe with expectancy.

Someone shouted, "There she comes!" The stage careened around the bank corner and into Main Street in a dun dust-cloud of its own making; the four sweat-pasted bays ran at a long lope, which they held until the reinsman set them down with a final flourish before the stage station, opposite the hotel.

There was the usual bustle. The postmaster got a limp mail sack from the boot, and substituted a limper one for it. A heat-flushed drummer supervised the transfer of his trunk of dry-goods samples from the top of the stage to the hotel porch. Two slouchy grooms unhooked the bays with a deftness born of long practise, and trotted them around the station to the stables in the rear. Old "Grouchy" Dean, leathery, wispy-moustached driver, stabbed his long-stocked whip into its socket and eased stiffly down. After waving a sun-cooked hand by way of farewell to the drummer, he opened the door of the coach and stood aside politely, battered hat in hand, to allow his sole remaining passenger to alight.

A slender girl with a wealth of shimmering coppery hair, and eyes like violets under water, stepped to the dusty street and wrinkled her pert nose saucily at a big, ruddy-faced man who came from the hotel at an elephantine lope. "Hello, chicken!" he bellowed, sweeping her off her feet and bear-hugging her in a manner that set her flimsy lace hat awry and threatened to damage her ruffled organdy dress.

"It's about time you showed yourself," she rebuked him playfully. "I was ready to decide that you had stood me up."

"Not a chance," he assured her as he set her on her feet and patted her trim shoulders awkwardly. "Comin' clean though, I'll admit that I was dozin' in my chair in th' office," he added, a bit sheepishly. "Bunch of our yearlin' stuff stampeded, an' I rid all night helpin' th' boys round 'em up."

She stopped in her tracks and pointed an accusing finger at him. "Fooling the baby again, are you? When you say that the cattle stampeded, what you really mean is that they were rustled."

"Mebbe so," he admitted hesitantly, then cut her off when she started to question him further. "Let's hustle on in; we can palaver while we're wranglin' our chuck."

HEADED for the *Elite*, and first aid for the weary, Grouchy shook his grizzled head sympathetically. "Best damn cowman in th' hull Black Hills country, an' th' prettiest gal anywheres," he muttered. "It'll be pure-dee unadulterated hell if them two lose th' Boxed Horshoe spread, after Randall's spent thirty long years a-buildin' th' brand up from nothin'."

Grouchy was crossing the sun-blistered plank walk toward the saloon door. He stopped abruptly and turned, shame-faced at having been heard talking to himself, when a slow friendly voice came from a young stranger who leaned lazily against an awning post. "Did th' old jasper git careless and lose a ranch outa his pockets when he was searchin' himself for th' makin's?"

Old Grouchy lived up to his name by glowering darkly at his questioner, at the same time giving the stranger a quick once-over. This was young, withy-bodied, lean-flanked, square-jawed with keen grey-blue eyes that

held a twinkle—also a glint that wasn't the least bit twinkling. He was plentifully freckled and satisfactorily weather-hardened. The ivory butt of the single-action Colt that was holstered at his right hip was balanced by the ivory handle of a hunting knife sheathed on his left. His belt, holster and leather cuffs were heavily picturated, and silver conchas adorned his hatband.

About to set the newcomer down in his mind as a bit dudish, Grouchy took another look at the eyes and the firm chin, and changed his estimate. This puncher would romp with you or fight you; the choice was yours.

The easy drawl came again, rewording the former question. "Did th' old geezer cache a ranch somewheres and furgit to mark th' place so he could find it again?"

Grouchy's forbidding scowl deepened. "What's it to yuh?" he snapped, taking a step toward the other and cuffing his hat-brim back as though about to go into action. "Anyway, I don't make a practise of takin' up with smart-aleck strangers."

"I ain't so particular as all that," the imperturbed newcomer came back, mischievously. "When I feel lonesome, I'll take up with any old battered-up stranger, even if he don't look like much of a much."

He extended a hand. "Shake, stranger."

Grouchy thought he wouldn't, but he did. He also thought he wouldn't drink with his new acquaintance; but within a minute, the two were chatting sociably at the bar—Grouchy with three fingers of straight rye before him, and the puncher contenting himself with a small beer. *Th' feller kinda gits under a feller's hide, some way,* Grouchy decided. *He wants yuh to like him, but he don't give a great big damn if yuh don't wanta cuddle up.*

THEIR FIRST drink together was consumed in silence; when their second had been served, Grouchy chose to become chatty. "Yuh was askin' 'bout Jim Randall an' his ranch. Fact is, if yuh're hell bent on knowin' it, that old cow nurse has had 'nuff 'flictions in late years to bog down any other cowman I know. He—"

"I smell a story comin'," the puncher broke in, "but let's have it while we eat. How about a good steak and eggs over at the Chinaman's, or a hot dinner?"

Grouchy interrupted in turn. "Nope. For th' sake of my stummick, I eat light at noon, in hot weather. Anyway, we only have forty minutes fur chuck here at th' Junction, and we've palavered away plenty of that time, awready." He called to a rather frowsy-looking fellow whose position might be said to be that of assistant barkeeper, "Hey, Blinky, fetch us a coupla beers an' some crackers an' cheese an' sardines—can of peaches if yuh got any."

Seated at a neat wall-table opposite the ornate bar, Grouchy's new friend looked curiously at the departing barman who had brought their food. "Kinda funny-lookin' barkeep," he commented. "Most booze-slingers hands is kinda fishy lookin', 'cause they're wet all th' time; but this geezer's paws are plumb calloused."

"That's Blinky Moran," Grouchy explained. "Bin a hardrock miner over in th' hills fur years till he took a job here a coupla weeks ago. Got that cast in his eye by 'sociatin' with a charge of powder too long after he'd lit th' fuse.

"Gittin' back to Jim Randall, he built up to ten thousand head of good cow stuff and th' best hawse herd hereabouts, an' he done all that durin' years when other cowmen were losin' money part of th' time. Up to about five years back, Jim was ridin' high. Then things commenced to commence.

"First, the bank here failed, pinchin' Jim's tail a'plenty, as he was a stockholder an' heavy depositor. When th' bank reorganized, Jim insisted on paying off what some of his neighbors lost, feelin' that they had done bizness with

the bank because he was vice-president or somethin'. He give th' new bank his own notes to cover his neighbors' losses.

"Then his wife got herself bull-gored an' died on him, after hospital an' doctor bills had piled up a plenty. On top of all that, a epydemic of rustlin' struck this range 'bout two years ago—th' rustlers seemin' to prefer th' flavor of Ol' Jim's beef. They admire his hawses, too. So, makin' a short story shorter, Randall's bogged down a plenty, an' th' bank has told him, cold turkey, that *he* hasta stop th' rustlers or *they'll* hafta twist his tail off—speakin' financial.

"That's th' reason why his gal Maysie has quit college an' come home. She's ridin' with me, an' he come this fur to meet 'er. Buckboard from th' ranch will be waitin' to pick 'em up when they drop off 'bout half way twixt here an' Twin Creek."

"Somebody got it in fur him, special?" the puncher asked.

Grouchy shook his sun bleached head vigorously. "Ain't no human got a call to twist Jim Randall's tail. I make that statement confidently, 'cause whoever *is* twistin' his tail ain't human.

"Furthermore, most everybody on this range has ketched hell more or less, stagelines included. Still an' all, it does seem like Jim Randall's a pet target fur th' wild bunch."

Grouchy hesitated for a time, then risked a raw impoliteness. "You figger on locatin' hereabouts?"

"Nope, just ridin' through from down Alliance way. Hawse got a stone bruise an' I was afraid it would turn into a heel-crack, so I'm waitin' to git him fitted with a bar shoe.

"I'll be easin' along in an hour or two. May see you in Twin Creek. My understandin' is that that's th' end of the stageline, so I reckon you'll stop there."

"Good guessin'," Grouchy applauded dryly. "Yuh must have what them college fellers call a mastermind to figger that out all by yur lonesome."

They grinned at each other and the puncher rose and sauntered out. Grouchy stopped at the bar, ostensibly to get matches, really to get information, knowing as he did that liquor loosens tongues and a bartender always is a good listener. "Keen-lookin' young gazabo," he remarked idly to Blinky Moran, who was gazing after the departing stranger.

"Keen is right," Blinky came back, gesturing with a soggy towel. "An' dear peepul can he squirt lead, or can he squirt lead?

"Some of th' boys was havin' a little jumped-up shootin' match down by th' crick when he rid in, this mornin'. He set in with 'em an' made 'em look like rheumatic mud turtles."

"Trick shootin'?" Grouchy asked, a bit disparagingly.

Blinky shrugged and made a sweeping motion with the towel. "Call it what yuh want. He set six bottlecaps on edge on a fence rail, an' stepped off twenty yards. Then that sixgun of his comes outa its holster all by itself an' meets his hand a little above his hip. Then it pur-r-s! an' them bottle caps ain't on that fence rail no more. Not havin' but one good eye to watch with, I can't say what happent to them caps, but I gotta strong suspicion that he shot hell outa 'em."

Grouchy sprung a question that had been kicking around inside his own skull. "You reckon he's wild?"

"Yuh never kin tell," Blinky said, noncommittally; "but I'm sayin' that if that geezer's with the law, th' wild bunch better ride round him. An' if he's with th' wild bunch, lawmen better look t'ther way when they see him comin'."

Grouchy nodded in agreement. "Yep, he's ba-double-dee, bad, if I'm any judge of hawseteeth."

By which Grouchy didn't mean that the stranger was evil, or even recklessly combatative; he simply meant that, if crowded, the puncher would fight at

the drop of the hat and drop the hat himself—his hat or anyone else's.

GROUCHY lighted a long, oily-looking stogie and headed for the stage when he saw the grooms coming with four roached roans, one of which was mincing and sidling and fishing at the bit. "Where'd you rope that burr-tail?" Grouchy asked one hostler. The man was giving his entire attention to the frisky one, which was snorting suspiciously at the pole.

It was a slur at horseflesh, but the hostler resented it only mildly. "He's some kinky, but any real driver oughta be able to make a Christian outa him, once he gets him started."

Grouchy became grouchy. "Yeh, an' a real handler would know 'nuff to hitch a salty one on the offside so's I can take him in my lap if I hafta, an' maybe feed him a little strap oil."

There was the customary last-minute bustle. The passengers straggled from the hotel, along with them a Chinese bowing diffidently right and left and smiling his ingratiating Oriental smile. The old driver took quick notice when he saw two men come from the express office carrying a metal box. It was a small box, but Grouchy noticed that the springs creaked a protest when it was loaded on the footboard below the driver's seat. Budge, the shotgun guard, seated himself above it and straddled it with his feet like a mother hen hovering a lone chick.

"Bullion?" Grouchy asked, as he heaved himself to his place.

"Naw, real coin, ripe to be spent," Budge answered. "Don't talk so loud, though; we're keepin' this shipment dark."

Having breathed in too much dust with his cavorting, the salty wheeler coughed explosively. "That horse got the heaves?" Budge asked.

"Naw, he's just laffin' at what yuh said," Grouchy answered, soberly. "Bein' a intelligent cayuse, he can't help laffin' when somebody talks about keepin' a shipment dark—at the same time settin' a shotgun guard a-straddle of said shipment, after some other fellers has carried the box carefully to the stage, steppin' like pall-bearers and watchin' over their shoulders to see if any bad boogermen is after 'em."

Grouchy shook his shaggy head again, and added worriedly, "An' me without no life insurance."

Budge patted the shotgun he had laid across his knees. "Old Betsy here sez the shipment goes through."

"Yeh, but fur all I know, Ol' Betsy may be a damn liar," Grouchy came back. "Looks like them express-company fellers would know by this time that they orter either send 'nuff shotgunners to do some good at a pinch, or not send none. On this line, one guard is just bandit bait—just like a handbill puttin' out th' information that there's somethin' on this rig worth guardin', though it ain't guarded plumb sufficient."

"Looks like they'd break a horse before hitching it to a stage," Budge complained. "With a team like this, we may not get through."

"What yuh think I'm settin' up here fur?" Grouchy snapped. "Think I'm just out fur a airin'?"

One hostler still was swinging on the bit of the rearing wheeler; the other handed the reins up to Grouchy, then went to help his partner bully-damn the snorter into line.

With the lines in hand, old Grouchy immediately became wholly one-sided in the manner of the old-time trail-whacker—weight on hip, hat-brim fending the sunglare off one grey eye, one foot on the brake-lever, stogie fuming in one corner of his mouth. "Let 'em ramble," he called out of the free corner of his mouth, kicking the brake-rachet loose.

Hoofs scrambled; the hostlers hustled themselves into the clear; the unruly wheeler pitched and shied away from the pole, crow-hopping back into his place when Grouchy's whip stung

his flank lightly and popped promptingly by his withers. The tires bit sand and commenced humming the endless tune of the road; the stage careened around the hotel corner and took to a meandering trail that wormed southwestwardly across a sere sand-flat, beyond which broken rockhills showed dimly in the dancing heat-waves. Old Grouchy relaxed complacently. He had brought the stage in with a masterful flourish and taken it out that way. From there on, it would be thirty miles of tooling with harness rings tinkling and busy hooves padding—unless—

2

WITHIN five miles, the recalcitrant wheeler had graduated from the primary grade; at the end of ten, he had learned to avoid the stinging lash by responding to his recently-bestowed name, "Kinky," always preceded by a few well chosen cusswords, and followed by more of the same. The harness rings had commenced tinkling in unison with the steady stepping of the four, when Budge craned his pudgy neck forward and gazed curiously and a bit uneasily at a strange outfit that had drawn off the trail to let them pass. "What kind of a rig do you call that?"

"That's old Distress Simpson an' his twenty-jassax-team ore train," Grouchy explained. "Th' boys named 'em Distress 'cause his full name is Samuel Orville Simpson, which makes his initials SOS—distress signal, you know."

"Pretty cute," Budge said, looking relieved. "But what do you mean by 'ore train'?"

"Mining company did some developin' over beyon' Twin Creek," Grouchy explained. "When they give up an' pulled out, they left a big heap of low-grade silver ore, which they figured wasn't worth teamin' to th' railroad at th' Junction. Distress figgers diff'rent, so he hauls th' stuff to th' Junction an' stacks it on th' right-of-way till he gets a carload, then ships. Th' boys at th' depot figger he makes about a buck a day, but it's all clear profit, bein' he don't grain them jassaxes none, an' feeds hisself nothin' but beans an' sowbelly."

The driver, a round-faced, placid-looking man in faded and patched denim overalls and jumper, waved and grinned as they jingled past, and Budge condescendingly joined Grouchy in returning the greeting.

After they had gone a little way, Grouchy pulled up and set the brake. "Resting the horses?" Budge wanted to know.

"Not exactly," Grouchy said, soberly. "I figgered we must be in Twin Crick, being yuh got yuh day's work done." He glanced knowingly at the shotgun; Budge had taken it from his lap and laid it lengthwise of the seat, and behind their backs. He looked all around. "Must be mistaken, though; don't see no stores hereabouts. I remember they got stores an' sich places in Twin Crick."

"Very funny," Budge said acidly, making no move for the gun.

"Giddap, hawses," Grouchy said, kicking the brake off. "*You an' me* is goin' to Twin Crick."

The land rose. Scrub cedar and alders displaced sparse sumac and prairie roses. The trail hardened, became twisted, climbed abruptly into a jumble of criss-crossed washes and scattered boulders—outposts of the foothills. Grouchy became one-sided again.

Ahead was a sidling decline, then a hairpin turn to the left, after passing between two sandstone boulders that left barely hubroom between their dun sides. That meant a smashed wheel—at the very least—if the reinsman miscalculated by so much as a hand-span. A

novice, or a cautious veteran, would have slowed to a walk, nursing the brake—especially with a green horse at the pole.

Not any of that for Grouchy. The tradition in the theatrical profession that the show must go on never was stronger than the stagedrivers' code, "Whack 'em through, regardless." Besides, there was Budge eyeing the rocky gateway aslant, then looking the seat over in vain search for something to get a grip on. Grouchy's whip popped promptingly, and his high nasal voice yipped out an order. The stage surged down the slide, took the first curve of the hairpin on two wheels and swayed on, the leaders' bobbing heads pointed straight at the rocky gatepost on their left. In the last fraction of a second allowed him, Grouchy swung the leaders snappily, then the wheelers. The swaying stage fairly snapped around on its altered course, then slowed gradually on a sharp incline where loose rubble forbade speed. Then—

The branches of a low-growing juniper at the side of the trail swayed and a coarse voice snarled, "Hold 'em up!"

"What the hell's up?" asked Budge, too startled to grasp the situation, at once.

"Whope, hawses!" Grouchy bawled, hauling on the lines and setting the brake, bringing the coach to a stop within the distance of its own length.

His team settled, Grouchy risked a quick glance around. A sun-glinted rifle barrel protruded from the dense foliage of a low-growing juniper on their left. Its twin showed over the top of a squat boulder to their right and a bit ahead.

IT WAS ENOUGH. After that one quick survey, Grouchy respected the ethics of the road by fastening his gaze on the team; the driver, he knew, was respected as a neutral—protected by the rules of the game—so long as he attended to his own business.

What about Budge? Grouchy knew the answer when he stole a swift side-glance at the guard, noted the rapid clenching and unclenching of his hands. The thin, tense lines of his mouth, had become a dead white disk centering a face that was set like granite, as the guard inched his chuffy body around and started a hand stealing slowly behind him to grip the shotgun. Inside, the Chinese squealed, subsiding when Jim Randall growled at him, "Stop that damn yowlin' an' stay put somewheres." Seconds later, the Oriental alighted and took to the back-trail unmolested. Chinese didn't count.

Budge made his try. Sensing that it was coming, Grouchy slyly flecked the restless leader in the flank and twitched his rein sharply, hoping that the bandits' attention would be attracted by the horse's restful plunging.

Whether or not he understood the old driver's move and played up to it, Budge chose that moment to swing the shotgun up and around.

No good; both bandits fired instantly. As though cuffed off the seat by some mighty unseen hand, Budge's chuffy body spun over the wheel and thudded beside the road, inert as a sack of grain. Before the shotgun slid from his nerveless fingers, it roared deafeningly twice, probably because of unconscious tightening of the guard's fingers.

The effect was devastating. Kinky screamed and reared, threshed wildly with his forelegs, then slumped sidewise across the pole, as the leader ahead of him plunged in the same direction, frantic from a deep splash in its left haunch.

With a dead horse and a cripple on his hands, Grouchy was momentarily helpless. As a result, the pole followed the movement of the two stricken horses, cramping a front wheel against a small boulder beside the trail and reducing it to a shapeless tangle of broken spokes, only fragments of which clung to the hub and twisted rim.

There was a half minute of silent inactivity; then a tall figure came erect by the juniper, grotesquely muffled in tow sacking from head to foot. "Reckon that demonstration will be 'nuff to hold you galoots fur a spell," came the queer muffled voice, sneeringly. Then he spoke more sharply. "Pitch that box off, driver; an' you big feller inside there, pile out an' carry the box down th' trail a ways an' pitch it inta th' bushes on this side of th' road.

"Come out steppin' careful, with yur hands scratchin' th' clouds."

"Never mind that part of th' program; I'm plumb naked about th' hips," Randall's deep voice answered, and the door creaked open.

"Probably lucky fur you, at that," the tall bandit commented. "I know yuh word's good, so we won't frisk yuh fur irons."

BURLY RANDALL strong-armed the box to his shoulder and walked steadily down the backtrail for a few rods; aware all the way that the shorter of the two hold-up men was keeping step with him inside the fringe of brush. Somehow feeling as if he were a conspirator in the crime, he heaved the box into the brush savagely, then tramped back to the shattered coach, boiling mad though and through and blaming himself no little. "First time since I was a button that I ever got ketched gunless," he grumbled to the old driver. "Riding stage both ways, I thought I wouldn't need none."

"Huh," Grouchy snorted. "If they's any place in Gawd's world where a feller needs shootin' irons worse than he does on this danged stageline, I dunno where it is. Yuh orter knowed that—"

"Shame on you Mister Dean," the girl's voice interrupted. "You ought to be ashamed to talk to Father that way. With the light the way it was, that bandit back of the boulder would have been able to see every move we made inside the stage; he'd have killed Father, for a certainty."

"Reckon yuh're right," Grouchy admitted. He added, admiringly, "Also, I'm remarkin' that yuh're a plumb cool-headed one to figger things out like that, at a time like this.

"Puttin' all that to one side, Randall, s'pose you help me unhitch what I got left in harness; then I kin help you put poor Budge inside outa th' sun."

"You better go somewheres and sit down in the shade," Randall said to the girl. "Yuh can't help none here, so—"

"Of course I'll help," she broke in, the violet eyes flashing rebelliously. "Just because you've coddled me ever since I've been able to walk, you needn't think I'm entirely helpless.

"This isn't exactly the time or place for an argument; but, Mister man, before long you're going to find out that to help is what brought me home. Starting right now, you've got yourself a hand."

Randall looked at the ruffled dress and white slippers. "But, honey, you're all togged up, an'—"

"Yes, I'm all togged up," she came back hotly. "I've been kept all togged up on money that you couldn't afford to spend, while things out at the ranch are going from bad to worse—as I learned from a letter a friend wrote me, the other day. As of right now, that's all off, Big man!

"So I'm all togged up, am I?"

She ripped a sleeve off the waist of her dress and turned to Grouchy, who was gazing at her, slack-jawed with surprise. "I believe you carry a medicine chest somewhere in the coach. I want to disinfect that poor mare's wound then unharness her and turn her loose. There's a little grass here, and we passed water a short way back; she'll find it, poor thing."

"Got some carbolic salve back in th' boot," Grouchy told her. "Soon's we git these other hawses where they'll stay put, I'll git it fur yuh, an'—"

She stamped a slippered foot. "There

it is again! *You* will get it. Why can't I—"

"Quit shootin', I'm s'renderin'," Grouchy begged, whimsically. "C'mon, Randall, we better set in on our own chores or fust thing we know she'll beat hell outa both of us. I ain't precisely what a feller might call plumb shy, but if you ever see a galoot facin' up to a het-up female, I ain't that galoot! What I mean is that I'm somewheres else, an' he's somebody else, if yuh git what I mean!"

Another sleeve and a flimsy handkerchief were sacrificed before the girl got the crippled mare's wound stifle-bandaged to her satisfaction, and turned the animal loose.

Meanwhile the two men had worked hard in the terrific heat. Kinky's wheelmate and the remaining leaders were stripped, all but their bridles, and tied in the brush. The guard's body was lifted into the coach and deposited in a somewhat crumpled position on the back seat. When the girl finished her task and joined them, the three had commenced gathering the tangle of harness and dumping it on the floor of the coach when Maysie stopped with a horse-collar in one hand and a hame and tugs in the other. "Listen!" she called. "I believe I hear someone coming!"

WORK STOPPED, and now the men caught the steady click-clack of shod hooves over rocky footing. Seconds later, a rider appeared at the foot of the incline and came on at a brisk road jog. The horse was big and muscular and was of that grandest of equine colors—a white-trimmed golden chestnut, with four high stockings and a star and snip. When stirred by his rider, who evidently had just sighted the stage debris, the chestnut surged up the slope and reared to a stop beside the gaping three.

"Gallopin' lizards!" Grouchy exploded, excitedly. "Dang my withered hide, if it ain't *him!*"

"What him?" Randall asked, twisting the ends of his stubby moustache in perplexity.

"Him," Grouchy repeated, inanely.

"Yeh, it's me," the rider said, grinning amiably.

"Not very enlightening," Randall commented, a little resentfully.

"I think myself that it's time fur some introductions," the stranger agreed, swinging easily down and stepping away from the stallion, which stood immobile, like a bronze statue, trimmed in a mist of white spume.

"First, this is my hawse, Pard, an' when I say *my* hawse I mean it fur a warnin' not to git too close to him—under any circumstances, or fur any reason."

"Some hawse, at that," Grouchy said, admiringly.

"Some hawse is right," Randall commented.

"Lovely color," the girl contributed.

"Yeah," agreed the stranger. He looked brazenly at her mass of wind-tousled hair and added, impudently, "In fact, it's my favor-ite color."

"You mean for horses, of course," she said, flushing slightly under his steady inspection.

"Incidentally, fur horses," he came back.

"That'll be 'nuff of that, Mister," Randall said, a little heatedly. "What we wanta know is, who th' humped-up hilarious hell are *you?*"

"Gimme time," the stranger suggested; "I was just comin' to that."

He struck a sedate ballroom attitude and bowed profoundly. "The name is Thurman, ladies an' gentlemen. Th' first name don't matter, 'cause everybody calls me Red. I never could figger out why." As he spoke, he took off his broad-brimmed hat, disclosing a shock of hair as red as an Alpine sunset.

Grouchy chuckled; Randall roared. The girl dimpled, then sobered, suddenly. "Shame on all of us for joking in a situation such as this. We might

better be thinking about what we're going to do about everything."

"Good idea," Red agreed. When both men started explaining at once, he cut them off. "If yuh don't mind, I'll rustle around an' kinda size things up fur myself.

"Stay put, fellah," he called to his horse, then turned away. He opened the door of the coach, glanced inside, then drew the empty shotgun from where Grouchy had laid it on the driver's seat and opened the breech to look through the barrels. After a brief inspection of the place where the box had fallen and Budge's body had dropped, he walked around the rig in an ever-widening circle stopping at the juniper momentarily, and again at the sinister boulder. At each place, he stooped and fumbled around in the undergrowth until he found an empty shell and pocketed it. Then, paying no further attention to the side on which the juniper stood, he trotted down the road till he reached the spot where Randall had thrown the box into the brush. "Be back in a minute," he called back, then took to the brush.

"I haven't the ghost of an idea why he thinks he can do anything up there," said the girl.

"Natchral born trailer," said Randall.

"He's a damn bloodhound," said Grouchy. "Comin' to think of it, though, when did we elect him boss of this outfit?"

"Go-gittin' geezer like him don't hafta be elected," said Randall. "We just ain't in his class; he knows it an' we know it."

"Personally, I won't admit anything like that," Maysie disagreed, bristling a little. "I think I'm just as good as—"

"Course yuh are," Randall agreed, hastily.

"Yur damn tootin'," Grouchy chimed in, "we ain't arguin' with yuh, not none whatever; yuh broke us of that habit, a bit ago."

JUST THEN, the stallion nickered a low welcome and Red rejoined them. Seating himself on the step of the stage, he rolled a smoke with exasperating deliberation, ignoring the questions they volleyed at him. "Quickest way fur us to swap ideas is fur me to tell what I've figgered out, an' you folks to correct me when I go wrong.

"Awright, they held yuh up, an' when th' guard said no, they gunned him a'plenty; in fallin' he let off both barrels of his gun, killin' a wheeler an' slashin' a leader some."

He nodded toward Grouchy. "Then th' feller with th' say-so told you to heave' th' box off, an'—"

"Stop yur wagon," Grouchy cut in. "How do yuh know *Budge* didn't throw that box down?"

Red pointed to the spot by the wheel and grinned. "Not bein' a mole, I could see where one corner of th' box fell on that guard's pant-leg or his boot-top, keepin' that end of th' box from printin' its shape in th' dust. That means he hit the ground before it did; that bein' th' case, who was th' next feller elected to handle that box?"

"Me," Grouchy admitted. "Also, I got no more put-ins to make. You tell it, I'll listen."

Red went on, "Then, actin' under orders, of course, Randall picked up th' box an' packed it down th' trail—did what th' man told him to. To head off questions, I'll say that I know that, because Randall's the only one of you three that wears heel-braces. Th' one on his right heel is loose; it shows plain in a deep track he made in th' soft ground, at th' edge of the brush, when he reared back on his heels, bracin' himself to throw that box."

"Go ahead, or I'm goin' up an' bite yuh," Grouchy threatened when Red stopped and commenced lacing up a fresh smoke.

"Oh, it's that way, eh?" Red said, looking mildly surprised. "I didn't reckon you was much interested in

what them bandits done after they got outside yur jurisdiction.

"Anyway, all they did was to fork their hawses and fan it.

"Bein's you're so curious, though, I might add that one of 'em is about six-foot-three, an' rides a free-goin' claybank that stands anyways sixteen hands.

"T'other geezer's a runty half-breed —anyway a part Injun—who forked a bay cayuse, that stands 'bout 14-2. Both th' hombres live aroun' here somewheres.

"Yuh needn't try to spot 'em from th' way I describe their hawses, though. They had them hawses on grass somewheres, an' caught 'em up strictly fur hold-up purposes. Before now, they've probably changed back to their regular saddlers and jogged home, cool as yuh please."

"It's my turn to ask questions, since Grouchy promised not to," said Maysie. "As Grouchy threatened a while ago, I'll bite if you don't tell us how you know all this."

"That's bribery," Red declared. "Maybe I'd better resist it, though, to keep Grouchy from dyin' of curiosity.

"I knew that them hawses ain't been rid much lately, 'cause their hoofs was all webbed out from not bein' shod. In a rock country like this, nobody rides a barefoot hawse very far 'fore his hoofs break up.

"Also them hawses hadn't bin grained none. So, addin' everything up, them two geezers live somewheres around here, an' didn't want yuh to ketch sight of their regular saddlers."

"Oh, he's right," Maysie trilled, excitedly. "I just remember—what that bandit said to Father."

"What was that?" Randall asked, looking puzzled.

"He must actually know you," she explained, "for when you told him you were unarmed, he said, 'We know your word's good so we won't frisk you for irons'."

"Bully girl!" Red applauded. "An' now, folks, bein's I bin ketchin' questions a plenty, I wanta pitch just one: how much talkin' did them sand-eaters do?"

"One of 'em—the big one—spoke three-four times; the little gazabo never let out a peep, or even let us see him walk," Randall answered.

"And the one that did talk disguised his voice every time," the girl contributed.

Red slapped his thigh and grinned expansively. "That does it!"

Grouchy tried to keep silent, but simply couldn't. "That does what?"

RED LOOKED at him pityingly. "Yuh danged old muckle-headed wampus, tell me why a waddy would shoot a phoney voice at yuh, if it wasn't 'cause he knowed you'd recognize his real one?

"As to t'other feller, he's got some kinda voice that's just his, an' nobody else's; he wouldn't even try to disguise it."

"Guess I'm a muckle-headed wampus too," the girl said, whimsically. "Anyway, I still can't understand how you described the horses with such apparent accuracy."

"About th' horses, that's an old one. Not having been curried none, recent, their hides was some itchy; they scratched themselves against th' trees where they was hitched, rubbing off hair a-plenty to tell how tall they was and what color," Randall said.

"K'reckt, go to th' head of th' class," Red enthused.

"But the men," the girl persisted. "Did they also scratch themselves against the trees, thus registering their height—even telling you that one of them was part Indian?"

"Not quite that way," Red informed her. "I just measured th' big feller's stride against mine. I'm six-one an' rangy built; but he steps a good two inches further than I do.

"Th' short one is part Injun, an'

showed it by toin' in some, besides follerin' t'other feller's trail, ev'ry danged inch of th' way. Also, he wears low-heeled boots—shoes maybe—which not many riders do, in cattle-country. I figger he's only *part* Injun, 'cause if he was a full blood he'd most likely wear moccasins, an' be done with it. That last part is just a maybe-so, however—only out-an'-out guessin' I've done."

Maysie turned to her father and the old driver. "Do either of you have anything to add to what Mr. Thurman has told us?" she asked, sweetly.

"Can't open the pot," Randall said, grinning.

"It's by me," Grouchy confessed. "I bin took with a sudden case of lockjaw. Anyway, I wouldn't dispute that long-complected red-top none if he had told us that either one of them fence-creepers had a back tooth that was plugged with a fillin' that had been stole from th' mouth of a left-handed chinyman with a harelip."

"All that having been decided, what do we do?" Maysie asked.

"First on th' program is to git yur arms covered 'fore yuh burn off two-three layers of hide," Red told her. "Wait while I git a clean shirt outa my bedroll, so we kin—"

"Better let her git it," Randall warned, solicitously.

"Secont th' motion," Grouchy cackled. "Yuh don't know it, pardner, but yuh're takin' yur life in yur hands."

"It's the heat," she explained when Red looked puzzled. "We must humor them all we can and try to get them somewhere out of the sun."

Astonishingly enough, the girl waited while Red got the shirt. When he held it for her, she obediently slipped her arms into the sleeves. Womanlike, aware that its bright yellow served to top off her dusty face and messed-up hair, she looked down at it disapprovingly. "I certainly must be a pretty looking sight."

"Yeah," said Red, brazenly.

3

RANDALL called a council, but it was short-lived. The rancher wanted to send somebody to the Boxed Horseshoe for his buckboard; Grouchy wanted to send to the Junction for a spring wagon. While they argued, Red got the axe Grouchy always carried wired to the reach, and disappeared up the hill. They heard the axe ring lustily for a time, then he reappeared, dragging a pliant ash sapling. Trimming its brushy end with his hunting knife, he ran the butt under the axle next to the shattered wheel, then over the crossbar of the tongue, wiring it fast at both places. "It's a cross between a sled-runner an' an injun travois," he said, stepping back to eye his handiwork admiringly. "Like th' dutchman's stone fence, it's 'not much fur pritty, but hell fur stout.' "

"Yeh, but bein' they ain't room fur a team to make th' turn, how we gonna—course I know yuh'll do it, some way," Grouchy added, hastily.

"Pard pulls good on a lass," Red explained. "You fellers hold th' tongue up to keep it from draggin' on th' rocks."

Tying the loop-end of his rawhide rope to the end of the tongue, he mounted and took a dally around the horn. The big horse inched up slowly until the slack had been taken up, then heaved.

"It's moving," the girl called dancing up and down excitedly as the improvised runner rasped over the rubble in a half-circle.

"He's got it an' gone," Randall exulted; "now it's th' Junction or bust."

"Probably bust," Grouchy predicted.

"My team's too light to haul a rig like that."

"Put 'em inside or on top," the rancher suggested. "That go-gitting heller of a stud can haul them and their load."

"I'll leave him hitched on," said Red, "but we'll let th' team do th' pullin' except when we hit a hill; don't want to git his back sore." His eyes twinkled as he added, "We need a little weight on his back to keep th' saddle from slidin'. Also, that gives a roper better traction."

He turned to the girl. "How much do yuh weigh, Miss?"

"About a hundred and twenty, but—"

"A hundred an' twenty is just right. Yuh're ridin'."

She looked down at her flimsy skirt and flushed. "I'm afraid I'm not dressed to—"

"Come here an' I'll set yuh on side-saddle fashion, with everything plumb proper."

She hesitated only momentarily, then went. "He must be a damn animal-charmer," Grouchy said in an aside to Randall. "Look how that stud keeps one eye an' one ear at him, waitin' fur orders."

"Yeah, but yuh ain't said nothing, at that," the rancher came back at him wonderingly. "I've spent fifteen years trying to gentle that girl down so's I could handle 'er. Now look how *she* keeps one eye an' one ear cocked at him, waiting fur orders."

Grouchy grinned wisely. "Yeah, but yuh're only her dad."

After Red had led him for a little way, the stallion accepted the girl as a mere passenger, but still looked to Red for orders. The travois slid rather easily over the rocky footing, but gouged deeply when they reached the sand. An hour later, when they met Distress Simpson's "ore train" coming back empty, he gave them the road again and cupped a hand to his good-natured mouth and called to Grouchy as they passed. "Bust a wheel, didjuh?"

"Naw," Grouchy bawled back, disgusted at the silly question. "We always travel this way in hot weather. We put one wheel inside outa th' sun, changin' 'em ev'ry hour. Keeps th' tires frum gittin' over-het."

ONCOMING night inked the creek-bottom, greyed the upper flat, transformed the domed knoll on which the little town lay into a velvety cushion on which twinkling lights winked like so many gems. With the stallion taking the bulk of the drag, and Red and Randall pushing, the grotesque outfit snailed around the bank corner and stopped before the station. A crowd commenced gathering, and soon packed the hoof-cupped street from walk to walk.

When Blake, the station agent, returning from a late supper, elbowed his way through the press, Grouchy didn't wait for him to ask questions. "Helt up," he explained, tersely, then handed the lines to a hostler and jammed his whip viciously into its socket. "Helt up fur the fourth time, an' made to like it. Damn me if I stretch another ribbon or crack a whip till that gang of dew-drinkers git their come-uppance."

He turned to Red, who stood at the stallion's head as Randall eased Maysie down, and started her toward the seclusion of Mom Pearson's parlor. "What's yur program, Cowboy?"

"One shot of rye, then supper," Red answered. "I'll look this burg over tonight an' inspect th' Boxed Horseshoe, tomorrow."

Aware that her face and hands were dust-soiled, her nose sunburned and her dress disheveled—to say nothing of that awful yellow shirt—Maysie was anxious to retire from sight; but she stopped and slitted her eyes at him reprovingly. "Coming to the ranch? And without an invitation?"

"Yeah," said Red, with great finality.

4

ACCOMPANIED by Grouchy, Red made himself acquainted with the Junction with the ease of one who has been places. After feeding Pard, and grooming him carefully, he hung his saddle gear in the office and asked Linton, the rheumy-eyed old proprietor of the feedlot, for permission to sleep in the mow. After the three had had a sociable drink from a flask which Red produced from a saddle-pocket, the permission was given—a little begrudgingly. Linton didn't appear to be the most sunny-natured man in the world.

When they left the feedlot, bound for the hotel in the hope of wangling a late supper from Mom Pearson, Red noticed that Grouchy looked appraisingly at every man they met. "Takin' th' census?" Red asked, interestedly.

"Naw," Grouchy answered, gloomily, "I'm lookin' 'em over fur height; we're lookin' fur a tall ranny, an' a short one—an' ev'ry danged geezer is either a beanpole or a runt. That makes suspects of ev'ry rag-dogged one of 'em."

Later, Red learned that Suspect No. One in Grouchy's book was a young preacher lately come from Vermont, who was six-feet-six and exceedingly timid about taking up western ways. Also, he wore spats—a high crime, with Grouchy.

When they reached the hotel, they found the street between it and the stage station still packed with men who were centering their attention on a big, craggy-faced man with a spade of black beard and a star on his vest who was supervising the removal of Budge's body. "Lug him on down to my office," Red heard him say. He turned to a squat moon-faced man who was standing beside him, and also wore a star. "Bill, go hunt up Coroner Grimes an' we'll hold th' inquest right away."

He raised his full voice till it fairly boomed. "Ev'ry man in this crowd is hereby deputized to aid th' law in roundin' up th' jaspers that done this devilment. I've had 'em in my hair long nuff; now we're gonna take in after 'em, an' stay after 'em till we git 'em roped. Mentionin' rope, I mean we'll use one."

"That's Sheriff Bob Ord an' his head deputy, Bill Haskell," Grouchy explained. "Bob's a little slow-minded, but he's one rip-snorter on wheels when he gits hisself woke up."

"Gonna set in after 'em tonight?" someone in the fringe of the crowd asked.

"Naw," the sheriff answered. "No use pushin' on th' reins; nobody kin foller sign in th' dark.

"Ev'rybody be here an' ready to ride at five o'clock. I'll give this man's country a real curryin' over, fur once."

After they had eaten prodigiously of the roast beef and vegetables Mom had obligingly reheated for them, Grouchy set out to introduce Red to the town. This consisted of a single business-section a block long, which dead-ended where a rectangle of despondent sward was occupied by nothing but a low stone building, with the sheriff's office in front and a jail to the rear.

Having viewed the town by the uncertain light of the kerosene lamps; Red approved it and the two gravitated naturally to the *Elite*. It was an ornate place, with a big display of oak-fixtures and mirrors. There was a roulette wheel and chuck-luck layout at the rear; a round table, covered with green baize with a slot in its center, suggested poker. The games had few patrons now, being unable to compete with the greater attraction before the stage station.

In a small brass-railed enclosure at the front end of the bar, a slender, well-groomed man with a sharp Latinish face and delicate hands sat at a shelf-

like desk shuffling some papers in an exasperated manner. "Pay me some other time, Lainson," he said to a cowboy who stood outside the railing with some crumpled bills in his hand. "Your note I saw here in the desk, this morning, but I am distressed to admit that I can't find it."

"That's awright," the cowboy said, readily; "take th' dinero now, an' tear up th' note when you find it."

Red and Grouchy turned toward the bar. "Kinda loose way of doin' bizness; speakin' plumb general, th' holder of a note may tear it up when he finds it, an' he may not. Anyway, he might fall dead an' his widow come collectin'," Red opined.

"No risk in this here case," Grouchy assured him. "That's Frenchy Reynault. He ramrods this place, an' he's square as they come. He stakes th' cownudgers when they go broke—which they all do—an' never charges 'em no interest. He ain't got no wife, an' if he fell dead right now, his ghost would come back here some dark night an' tear up that note."

"Looks like he'd go busted, makin' loans plumb miscellaneous that way," Red suggested. "Must keep him plenty busy to rod this life-savin' station an' run a loan-bizness on th' side."

"Hell, he ain't no booze-slinger," Grouchy declared. "This place is only a sideline with Frenchy, though he makes headquarters here where he kin meet ev'rybody.

"He stakes th' nesters, an' th' two-bit ranchers, same as he does th' punchers, but he does it on shares. He's got cows an' hawses all over th' range, looked after by fellers who split th' calf or colt crop with him. A good many of th' little ranchers around here got their start that way. Some of 'em ain't so danged little, now; but all of 'em still come to Frenchy when they need a few bucks."

"Maybe I better git myself introduced to th' feller," Red said; "I ain't been busted for a long time, but yuh never can tell."

"He'd stake yuh, at that," Grouchy said, confidently. "Be no trouble to meet him. He likes to git th' news straight, when somethin' happens on th' stageline; so me an' him'll be havin' a little chinfest, after a bit, an' yuh kin set in on it."

AS THOUGH in fulfillment of Grouchy's prediction, Reynault looked their way then closed his desk hurriedly and came to the end of the bar where they were giving their orders. "Good evening, my friend," he said to Grouchy, genially, then looked at Red and smiled an inquiry: "And this gentleman is your friend?"

"But come back to my private room where we can talk without interruption." After signaling for Blinky Moran to follow, Reynault led the way to the rear. "The ogre's den," he said smilingly, as he opened a door and waved them into a snug, plush-furnished room.

They had just found seats when Blinky shuffled in carrying a tray containing bottles, glasses and a bowl of chipped ice. "And what are your tastes?" Reynault asked hospitably. "We have here rye, bourbon, rum—"

"Yuh named it, first shot," Grouchy grinned; "it'll be straight rye fur both of us."

Reynault laughed lightly and seated himself in a massive, over-stuffed walnut chair. As he settled back luxuriously to sip daintily at the cognac Blinky had handed him without direction, Red noticed that he wore fine silk corduroys, neatly tailored. His tie-pin was a cluster of small diamonds, and there was a like ornament on his double watch chain. A single stone of many carats was set in his finger ring. His belt was a double-chain of flat silver links, and spurs of the same metal tinkled on the heels of his Morocco leather boots when he crossed his shapely legs and leaned back in his chair with a satisfied air.

After lifting the lid of a silver humidor to spray cigars on the table-top, he sipped another taste of cognac and said, "We are now prepared to converse as gentlemen should. I have heard much about the hold-up—mostly gossip and rumors. Now I should like to get the story firsthand from eye-witnesses who can be trusted to tell it straight."

"Don't look at me when yuh're hungry fur information," the old driver protested. "I bin took with fallin' of th' brain, or somethin'. Mind don't seem able to do no figgerin'.

"Take Red, though. He rustled around fur ten-fifteen minutes an' found out more than all us Junctioners has uncovered since ol' Shep's gran'-father was a pup. He thinks—"

"Pull up yur hawses," Red cut in, a bit sharply; "I wasn't even there when the big show was on."

He turned to Reynault and winked suggestively. "Th' truth is that Grouchy's th' only one that's named a suspect."

Reynault smiled and nodded understandingly. "When it comes to that, I confess that I have a few suspects, myself."

"Right now, though, suppose we confine ourselves to the facts; perhaps at some later date we can compare notes and name names."

"Suits me," Grouchy said, resignedly, "though I still think that Red could—"

Red cut him off again. "Trouble with you is that yur mind rests whenever yuh start talkin'. Quit tryin' to think and tell what yuh know."

Warned by the sly kick Red landed on a lean shin, under the table, Grouchy told the story. "Them onhuman dew-drinkers kilt a good hawse an' crippled another'n," he wound up as a climax. He added as a minor incident, "Besides that, they kilt Budge—which may also tell agin' 'em when comes judgment day."

"In case judgment day ever comes here on Earth," Reynault contributed, uncertainly. "Sometimes I think they'll be sure to trip themselves, eventually; then they pull another job and get away clean. It's pretty discouraging, and it's damaging me personally—the main part of my income comes from dealing with newcomers. With the rustling and all, people are getting afraid to settle here."

"Do yuh think th' stagecoachers an' th' rustlers are the same bunch?" Red asked.

Reynault nodded emphatically. "Not a doubt of it. Some fellow with brains is at the bottom of all these depredations; and, besides being smart, he's brutal and ruthless—not the kind to stand for any competition." He paused thoughtfully then went on, as one choosing his words carefully. "Henderson, our bank-cashier, thinks he has a clue, but he admits it's a slim one—a mere theory, probably. He's promised to present the matter to the next meeting of the board of directors." He smiled ruefully, then added, "As I am a member of the board and a stockholder, I'm interested especially as we are afraid the express company will refuse to accept money shipments, unless conditions change."

RED HAD another question. "Do yuh think th' sheriff is lookin' spooky-eyed at anybody?"

Reynault shrugged that one off lightly. "As to that, Ord suspects everybody. Mind you, I'm not saying but that he's a good officer; but he just doesn't have bloodhound instincts."

He shrugged again, then added, "I guess I don't have the making of a good detective, either. Like Ord, I'm long on suspects and short on evidence."

Reynault frowned in annoyance when someone pounded loudly on the door, then turned the knob and came in, uninvited. It was Ord, and the big officer looked tired and worried. "Hello, Frenchy, howdy, Grouchy," he greeted, then looked at Red. "Thur-

man, eh?" he grunted after Reynault had introduced them. "I reckon that name'll do as well as any other, when a maverick waddy wants to put a brand on hisself."

Red felt himself becoming heated inwardly; the designation, "waddy" properly refers to a prairie vagabond and small-time hide-thief, at worst—or year-round grubline rider, at best. In any case, a saddlebum.

The sheriff's next words failed to improve Red's temper. "Ridin' on through?"

Red's good-natured smile had vanished, and his voice had a rasp in it. "Maybe I'll ride through an' maybe I won't. Who wants to know?"

"I do. Furthermore, I'm askin' where yuh're from."

"Down Alliance way, if it's any of yur bizness."

Red was on his feet now and was smiling again—a fighting smile that promised action. Ord's heavy face still was devoid of expression. "Who'd yuh ride fur, down there?"

There was a short, heavy silence, then Grouchy intervened. "Aw hell, Bob, no use to be hornin' this feller around. He was here in town when th' stage left, this afternoon; talked to him an' et with him, myself."

"Spies fur th' wild bunch talk an' eat, I reckon," Ord said, pointedly. "An' I'm rememberin' that somebody tips these money shipments off. With that go-gittin' stud under 'im, it wouldn't be any trouble fur 'im to cut acrost th' prairie, an' be with his pard at th' boulders, when th' stage got there."

"Got just one more thing to say, and that's all," Red told him. "I had a bar shoe tacked on my hawse 'fore I left here an' he's wearin' it yet. If yuh find any of that kind of tracks mixed in where they don't belong, yuh got a talk comin'. Anyway what yuh gonna do about all of it?"

"Plenty, if I take a notion that way; put you in th' calaboose first an' check up on yuh later."

Red's voice was iced, now. "Some program yuh've laid out, Mister; start workin' it out whenever th' spirit moves yuh."

Ord still refused to become heated, but he remained stubbornly bent upon imposing his authority. "Didn't say I was gonna close-pen yuh; said I would if I felt like it. All I'm sayin' right now is that yuh better walk straight while yuh're hangin' around this range, an' not be caught in bad company. No use fur yuh to run yur horn in th' ground an' beller and paw dirt; I just ain't got time to listen, right now."

The sheriff downed the whiskey Blinky had poured for him, then stalked to the table and poured and drank another. "See yuh some other time, Frenchy," he promised, then left.

"Mustn't mind him," Grouchy said, as the door closed behind the sheriff's broad back. "He ain't tryin' to spook you anymore than he would any other stranger. Main trouble with him is that he just spits out what's on his mind, plumb regardless. He's one rough-edged cuss, I'm sayin'."

"Perhaps tactless is the right word," Reynault suggested, "Ord's a good fellow and a good officer, but he insists upon doing things his own way. Also, we must allow for the fact that he is plenty worried right now."

"I'm admittin' that I'm some worried, myself," Red said. "I'm afraid that inky-waisted gazabo is gonna keep right on keepin' on till somebody puts a cramp in his style. I ain't honin' to do that job, so I hope he quits ridin' me. I ain't used to bein'—"

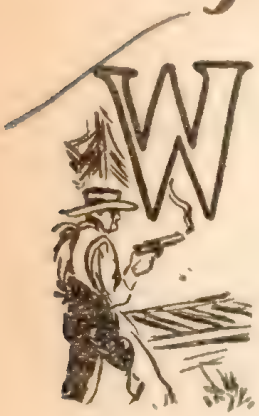
"Excuse me, Reynault. They's a kinda sassy-lookin' bug on yur collar. Hold still, an' I'll—"

"There, I got th' son-of-a-gun." He got his hat from the table and tilted it on. "There's an old sayin' that th' best of friends must part."

"Yeh," Grouchy agreed. "We better

pull outa here 'fore we wear out our welcome an' th' seats of our pants."

5



WHEN THE two friends returned to the front room, they found the place crowded—sure indication that Budge's body had been disposed of, and the crippled coach removed from the street. From conversations he overheard, Red learned that the inquest already had been held, no witnesses being heard. "No use to bother folks by askin' 'em to testify," Grimes the fat coroner—who was also a bootmaker—had decided. "Ev'rybody knows that Budge was kilt by some onregenerate bushwhackers to me unknown, so that'll be th' jury's verdict."

The jurors nodded in agreement; the spectators approved; the hold-up became a closed incident, so far as Grimes was concerned. Red found himself wondering whether, in case he should allow himself to be arrested and jailed, ensuing proceedings would be conducted with a similar disregard for the law; he thought they would be.

Neither he nor Grouchy being a heavy drinker, they contented themselves with small beers and dawdled over them. Reynault and Blinky came from the back room, the former smilingly declining their invitation to join them. "Back there in my den, I drink in moderation, and chiefly for the entertainment of my friends; if I drank out here, there'd be no end to it, as I couldn't well be sociable with some and rebuff others."

"Good thing fur yur bizness that other geezers don't feel that way about it," Grouchy said, eyeing the swigging crowd lining the bar. "Seems like ev'rybody an' his brother is hell-bent on buyin' fur somebody else."

"You are right," Reynault agreed, readily. "Americans are too generous, and their custom of treating each other is the chief cause of drunken sprees."

"Yuh talk as though yuh wasn't born in America," Red observed.

Reynault shook his sleek head in negative. "I have been here a long time, and like to think of myself as an American. As a matter of fact, though, I am a Canuck—born a little way from Montreal."

Reynault excused himself politely and returned to his desk up front. Taking his place at the bar, a merry-eyed little man, bald and fortyish, appeared to get immense enjoyment out of the tall glass of lemonade Blinky set before him without being asked. He was bareheaded and had a pencil crutched back of each ear. Black sleeve-protectors and a green-billed eyeshade enabled Red to have him tagged before Grouchy introduced him as "Lon Henderson, corral boss at th' bank."

"Working overtime on account of the kid who is one of our tellers. He's six dollars out of balance and is worryin' himself sick," he said.

The banker's round face dimpled roguishly and he chuckled, "I know where he made his mistake in checking up, but I came away so he could figure it out for himself. Going to let him fret for a couple of hours or so, if it takes him that long; be a good lesson to him.

"Punish me more than it will him, at that," he added ruefully. "I don't drink liquor, and a banker shouldn't be seen gambling; so all I can do to pass the time is to drink a few lemonades and dodge drunks. That's my good deed, for today."

Grouchy looked at the clock above the back bar. "Bein' a mite past th' age-limit fur Boy Scouts, I reckon I'll go turn in."

"Better come an' bed down with me, Red."

"Nope, reckon I won't; most usual I bunk close to my hawse when we're in a new place."

"By th' way, speakin' of hawses, are yuh ridin' with Ord in th' mornin'?"

"Not any," Grouchy answered. "I figger yuh won't be joinin' th' posse, and Ord wouldn't let yuh if yuh tried. I'm ridin' with *you*, Cowboy—tomorrow an' from then on through till Hell freezes over an' we skate our broncs on th' ice."

AFTER THE old driver left, Red bucked the chuckluck layout, neither winning nor losing much. After testing the roulette wheel with a similar lack of results, he gave up gambling and engaged in a game of bottle pool with a bald-headed cowboy who used his skill, and sang trail songs through his nose and off key.

"Quittin'," Red told him, after a couple of games. "I don't know whether it's your good playin' or your bad singin', but somethin's keepin' me from gittin' started right. Reckon I better go bed down."

Though Red's manner was easy and casual as he racked his cue and turned toward the front, the fact was that he was somewhat keyed-up. From the time when he and Grouchy had come from the back room, he had been aware that he had been followed about the place and watched alertly by a shaggy-headed man in a buffalo vest. Testing the fellow out, Red had made as if to leave after quitting the chuckluck table, and again when he abandoned roulette. Each time, the fellow had elbowed his way to the front and outside, coming back within a few minutes, when Red didn't follow. "His attentions is flatterin'," Red observed to himself, "but somehow I'm suspicious of his intentions."

Red started toward the street entrance, noting out of a corner of his eye that Buffalo Vest immediately eased through the swing-doors and crossed the walk, then took to the street.

Red crossed him up. Continuing toward the front for a few strides, he suddenly slanted toward the wall opposite the bar, and dropped into a chair, facing the shutter. Within a minute, he saw Buffalo Vest cross the walk and peer over the shutter, turning his shock-head from side to side to search all parts of the room with his muddy, close-set eyes. Finally he eased back inside and was sidling through the crowd along the bar when Red stood up and waved his hat and called, "Hey, feller! I mean th' lop-eared sand-eater with th' fuzzy vest!" he explained when several men looked his way inquiringly.

Obviously taken by surprise, Fuzzy Vest gulped and stared, then said scowlingly, "Ain't jawin' at me, are yuh?"

"I ain't talkin' to yur gran'mother or yur little brother," Red came back, then more amiably, "Fact is yuh look lonesome an' I'm just pinin' fur good company. What say we set here at this table fur a spell an' just lie to each other sociablelike?"

The fellow's low brow corrugated as he seemed to consider the proposal for time. Then, he shook his unkempt head. "Don't know yuh none; don't want nothin' to do with yuh."

"We kin fix that easy as pie," Red assured him; then his voice hardened suddenly. "Th' way we're gonna fix to keep us from associatin' publicly, which might ruin yur social standin', is that I'm leavin', an' while I'm doin' it, yuh're gonna set here all by yur sweet lonesome—just set here an' think about how ornery an' snakey a coyotish drygulcher kin git to be."

It wasn't a request or a suggestion; it was an order. Recognizing it as such, men commenced moving—moving apparently without purpose, but moving in a way that created a cleared floor area between the two. The room became suddenly silent, so silent that

when someone coughed high in his constricted throat as a nervous man does when tension build up, a dozen other men were startled into coughing also. There were few cowards among them, but lead buzzing about a crowded room offers no pleasant prospect.

With all men eyeing him, wondering what he would do, Buffalo Vest faced it out. His piggish eyes glinted as he snarled, "Who's callin' me a drygulcher?"

Red's answer was prompt. "I am; an' I'm callin' yur hand."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah!"

Red came out of his chair; the other shifted his feet and was falling into a fighting crouch when Reynault came from his desk with a rush and intervened. "Hold everything, please, Thurman," he called across the room, then stepped close to Buffalo Vest and spoke sharply. "I've kept an eye on you this evening, Harkness, and the gentleman is right all the way. Right now, do as he says; and, in future stay away from the *Elite*.

"Thurman called you a drygulcher, I add that you're a very awkward one—so awkward that any fool would have known what you were up to, and Thurman is no fool. After all that has been said, you have no talk coming. Just sit over there till Mr. Thurman has gone—which need not be soon."

Though he wore no visible weapons, and had made no threatening gesture, Frenchy Reynault had personality-plus. Harkness gave him an ugly look and muttered something about "buttinskys" before he sat down as directed—but the point was that he *did* sit down as directed.

AGAIN RED started to leave, but stopped up front to thank Frenchy, who appeared to be transferring money and papers from his desk to a safe that stood back of a screen, next to the front window.

"No thanks are due me," Reynault assured him. "It was a simple business matter with me. The better class among our patrons don't enjoy the company of a fellow like Harkness, and I've been intending to run him away, for some time. It just happened that you were involved."

By way of emphasis, Reynault tapped the desktop lightly with a sheaf of papers he was about to stow away. "Better watch Harkness, Thurman. He's tricky and spiteful—a gunslick, too. And he seems to have it in for you, up to the handle."

"That's what's got me puzzled," Red confessed. "Never saw th' fence-creeper till tonight, that I know of; can't figger why he is itchin' to gun me down."

Looking annoyed, Reynault leaned across the cigar counter and dropped his smooth voice almost to a whisper. "I'd rather you didn't play me for a sucker, Thurman."

"Meanin' how?"

"Meaning that, being anything but a fool, you know as well as I do. There being nothing personal between you two, some third party set Harkness after you."

"Maybe so," Red conceded, judgmatically, "but, in that case, another great big ring-tailed question pops up: Who sicked Harkness onto me—an' why?"

Reynault slanted a keen look at him, then shook his head. "I can't quite make you out, Cowboy. Either you know a lot more than you pretend to, or you don't. It's just that simple, and I'm letting it lie. After all, you haven't asked me to interest myself in your affairs."

"I ain't much of a feller to holler calfrope an' beller fur help," Red explained, grinning. "All th' same, I hope I got sense 'nuff to feel thankful when a feller helps me outa a tight. We'll talk more about that later; right now, you seem pretty busy, so I'll leave."

Red had turned toward the shutter again, but he halted and turned back

when Blinky Moran hailed from back of the bar, "Hey, Thurman, yuh left yur sack of smokin' here on th' bar."

"Oh, it's that way, eh?" Red thought. "Wheels within wheels and all of 'em spinnin'." He had left no tobacco anywhere.

At the bar, he soberly accepted the empty tobacco-sack Blinky offered and wasn't surprised when the bartender whispered, huskily, "The back door's unlocked, case yuh'd ruther leave that way. Some do."

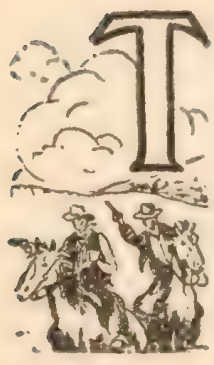
"Don't like back-alleys—too dark," Red told him. "Our ol' preacher down home always told us to walk in th' light."

Blinky made a sweeping gesture with his towel. "Suit yurself. It's your funeral—an' there'll be one."

"Thanks fur th' tip," Red grinned, cheerfully, "but don't join th' mourners yet."

Once more Red started to leave. As he passed along the bar he chanced to glance across the room to where Harkness sat by the wall, staring back at him. The gunman's low forehead was knotted in a forbidding scowl, but his wide mouth was grinning complacently. It was a combination grin—fox, wolf and gila monster.

6



THOUGH Red's manner seemed easy and casual, as he strolled indolently toward the front, he really was maneuvering calculatingly. So when four young customers who had been drinking not wisely but too well, decided that a little fresh air would fit their case nicely, swung away from the bar and started for the street, singing an unprintable version of the third verse of "Cripple Creek Lil," Red stepped aside politely, then fell in close behind and reeled along with them, singing louder than any of them. But his gun was in his hand when, arm-in-arm they had rollicked and howled their way to the entrance, where Red let out a strident whoop and slammed his body against them, ramming them against both leaves of the shutter and spilling them out on the walk. One tripped over his own spurs and went down; the others tripped over him, and all of them went into a tangle of writhing arms and legs, with much heaving and grunting and smothered cuss-words.

But Red didn't go down; his initial purpose having been to avoid being backgrounded against the saloon lights, he now vaulted the undulating heap of humanity on the walk and took to the street, bending low and zig-zagging toward the weed-grown vacant lot between the stage station and Swede Lorenson's general store.

The big cowboy's move had been well-planned, and so swiftly executed that he had nearly reached the opposite walk when a pin-point of flame showed in the growth at the rear end of the lot. A bullet horneted so close to his head that Red dropped to all fours, then rolled to the edge of the walk. He sent a shot humming toward where the tell-tale flame had flared, then one a yard to the right of it, and another a yard to the left. He held his fire and peered cautiously across the walk when, at his third shot, someone out there in the darkness let out a high-pitched, animal-like screech. That was followed by a threshing, wallowing sound among the weeds—a sound that diminished gradually until he faced nothing but darkness and silence.

Suspicious of a ruse, Red lay still and watched. He still was lying still and watching when, minutes later, he was surrounded by dozens of men from the *Elite,* who milled about in the street and on the walk, yammering out excited questions and giving themselves the silly answers usual under such cir-

cumstances. Finally, Reynault and Blinky appeared, the former carrying a smoky-globed lantern and the latter shouldering a businesslike-looking sawed-off shotgun. They had just started to question Red, when Ord steered his big paint horse into the circle of lanternlight, and his big voice rolled out:

"Shut up, ev'rybody, till I try to figger some sense outa this up-scuffle! Hellsfire, how d'yuh expect me to find out what happent, with all of yuh yappin' at onct—an' sayin' nothin', at that?"

Unreasonable and overbearing as he had shown himself to be earlier in the evening, the big officer acquitted himself well, in this emergency. As soon as the crowd had quieted somewhat, he showered orders right and left. "Bill, you an' Hank run these drunks outa here and head 'em fur home! If any of 'em balk, gun-whip hell outa 'em and slap 'em in th' cooler!

"Reynault, you an' Blinky 'pear to be in yur right minds, so sidle up here an' tell me what this is all about! Rest of yuh ease off a ways an' give a feller at least 'nuff room to whip a dawg on."

Reynault told what had occurred in the saloon, using but a few words; Blinky told the same story, but said nothing about his little private talk with Red.

When the two had finished, Ord turned to where Red still sat on the edge of the walk. "Make talk," Ord said, gruffly.

"I'm a little like th' world-famous little boy who had nothing to say, bein' sure that things would show for themselves," Red answered, whimsically. "All I know is that I started across th' street, headed fur th' feedlot, when somebody cracked down on me from them weeds over there next to th' alley. If yuh'll scout around over there, I think yuh'll find a feller, but my guess is that he won't have much to say, either. Maybe folks'll think I'm kinda hard-boilt to talk this way, but I've bin horned around tonight till I don't care what I look like or what folks think."

WHILE RED talked, Ord had remained in saddle, slapping a booted leg abstractedly with his rein ends and eyeing Red aslant. Now he swung down and heaved his big body to the walk. "Stay put," he said brusquely, then took to the weeds, after jerking his head to Frenchy and Blinky, requesting that they follow.

"Bein's it's my party, in a way, seems like I oughta be among them present when th' meetin' opens back there," Red suggested, coming to his feet.

"Stay put," Ord repeated, stolidly and tramped on, taking the lantern from Reynault and swinging it before him in an arc that enabled him to see the full width of the lot.

Red reseated himself, laced up a smoke and stuck it on his lip. But instead of lighting it, he sat shifting his box of matches from hand to hand abstractedly and staring after the bobbing lantern. "Bogs me down," he muttered, after time. "Seems like I'm anybody's target; same time, I ain't got no target. It's like walkin' barefooted through tall grass, knowin' that there's rattlesnakes all around yuh, but not bein' able to locate 'em.

"Somebody soured me with Ord. Somebody pointed me out to Harkness an' said, 'sic 'im, Towser.' Somebody told this other waddy to cut me down."

He thought a while longer, then grinned cheerfully. "All them things is liabilities; I got some hidden assets, too. It's up to Red Thurman to keep 'em hid and spring 'em plenty sudden at th' right time an' in th' right place —if I find th' right place an' live till th' right time."

The progress of the search was traced easily enough. The sheriff's lantern bobbed fitfully as he quartered the weed patch. After zig-zagging slowly for a time, it suddenly speeded up

on a straight west course, stopping abruptly, just before reaching the alley. There it dipped when Ord bent to examine something at his feet and the faces of the other two men were limned clearly as they bent also. Then the fact that only the legs and lower bodies of the three were shown in the light, told that they had recognized the man on sight, and were in consultation.

Then Ord's booming voice came again. "Bill, get another lantern an' fetch my hawse around here!" Then, apparently as an afterthought, "Have Jake go find Grimes again an' send him to my office. Got another job fur him, an' want it done tonight—be too busy tomorrow to fuss with an inquest."

Two dirty-flued lanterns now joined in reporting proceedings. One illuminated a side of the paint horse, and the body swaying grotesquely across the saddle as it proceeded southward along the alley, was blanketed for a time by intervening buildings; then it reappeared where the south end of Main Street dead-ended before the sheriff's office.

The other lantern beelined back through the weeds and the big sheriff showed up on the walk, with Reynault and Blinky still siding him.

Obviously, Ord was in a bad humor, but his first words quickly made it clear that his ill-humor was directed at no particular person. "Yuh're in th' clear on this," he said to Red, then added, "Yuh kilt Sam Hendricks; does that mean anything to yuh?"

"Not a thing," Red told him. "Never heard th' name before."

"Maybe this will help," Blinky contributed. "Sam Hendricks is—was—th' bald-headed ol' wampus yuh played pool with. Have it in fur Sam, did yuh?"

"Only on account of his bad singin'," Red said. "Outside of that, I bought him a drink or two, an' we seemed to git along plumb amiable. I can't even guess out a reason why he cracked down on me, except that hornin' me appears to be stylish around here, and Sam wanted to follow the style."

"Said yuh was in th' clear," Ord said, as though that settled everything —which it did, for the present, at least.

THE BIG sheriff turned south along the walk, headed toward his office. Blinky Moran scowled thoughtfully at Red, opened his good-natured mouth as though about to speak, then closed it again and headed diagonally across to where men were commencing to dribble back into the saloon. Frenchy Reynault gave Red's muscular shoulder a forceful pat of friendly encouragement. "I believe I'd better go along and see you safely tucked in bed and the covers tucked in.

"Not that you appear unable to look after yourself," he added, dryly, jerking his head meaningly toward the sheriff's office, where men could be seen unloading Hendricks' body.

"Thanks a' plenty, but I'd rather go it alone," Red told him. "If you come along, folks might get th' idea that I think I need a bodyguard. Anyway, I reckon th' show's over, fur tonight."

But Red took to the middle of the street and watched shadowy spots under the awnings and between buildings till he turned in at the feedlot, where he found old Linton playing solitaire on his musty bunk.

"Couldn't sleep," Linton said, crustily; "some kind of a danged gun-ruckus somewheres down the street."

"I heard about it," Red said, dryly. "Fact is, I was in it, a feller might say."

"Well, I wasn't in it," Linton came back, "one good reason bein' that I was holed up where I belong, instead of bein' out rake-hellin' about th' saloons."

He squinted his rheumy eyes at the grimy-faced wall clock above the head

of the bunk. "Midnight, an' men still traipsin' around so a feller can't sleep much, but I reckon I'll try it."

Linton heaved up a chuffy leg and was starting to draw off a boot as Red got his bedroll and left the office. Climbing to the mow, he spread his tarp and blanket in the hay and shed his belt and boots; before lying down, he fumbled around in the dark till he found two pitchforks and crossed their handles across the opening above the ladder in such a way that they would become dislodged and clatter to the floor below if anyone tried to visit him unannounced. Satisfied with that arrangement, he went to bed—asleep as soon as he touched the blanket.

Perhaps a half-hour later, he came upright and drew out the sixgun he had tucked under the folded slicker he had used as a pillow. Hazily aware that he had been roused by a pistol-shot somewhere about the north end of the block, he listened and thought he heard someone running down the cross street, toward the alley.

"Some pifflicated ranny lettin' off steam," Red decided when no evidence of excitement came from the street. He stretched out on his blanket again and proceeded to build himself a dream—a most pleasant dream in which a slender coppery haired girl was smiling at him with her deep blue eyes and saying over and over, "Do come on out to the Boxed Horshoe and be happy!"

7

SANDSTONE JUNCTION was waking gradually, and Red Thurman was waking with it. Ordinary night-sounds — such as Widow Bender's heifer bawling for the calf that had been taken from her; the creak of the wind-swung sign spanning the walk before Lorenson's store; the banging of a loose window shutter in the upper story of the hotel—appeared to be subsiding, partially muffled by other sounds coming out of the darkness. Out on the range, cur and collie relayed the message that men were riding. Occasionally, hoofbeats drummed on the creek bridge and padded past on the sandy street; men's voices were heard and the creak of saddle-leather and the jingle of spurs and bitchains. Red yawned sleepily, rolled over, cuddled again and tried to coax back that alluring dream.

No use; instead of diminishing to suit Red's purposes, the sounds grew louder, with shorter intervals between. Red wallowed through the hay and looked through the paneless window that overlooked Main Street, realizing at once that it was early morning, but that low-scudding clouds were holding back the dawn. Regretfully, he went back to his bed-down and commenced drawing on his boots.

Last night, there had been tension and confusion that had befuddled him; now, undisturbed by others, he saw many things clearly. Not for a moment did he doubt that everything that had happened to him in town was connected directly with his appearance at the scene of the hold-up, and his investigations there. Somebody suspected that he had learned too much; and that somebody, and other somebodies, were out to get him.

At the saloon, he had assumed that he had to deal with only one drygulcher—and he was wrong about that. Reviewing it now, he knew that Blinky Moran had hinted, not only that he should leave by the rear door, but that someone else had gone out that way.

Harkness had not been awkward; nor had he underestimated Red; he had been bait to hold Red's attention, while Hendricks struck from behind. If there was a slip-up, they would have him between them, with an added advantage in the fact that Red couldn't

just step out there and commence shooting. He had to wait until there was an attack, or immediate threat of attack. Appraising the intelligence of the two gunmen, he knew that they were incapable of arranging a nice two-timing such as that.

Also, Red saw that when, aided by Reynault's intervention, he had succeeded in shelving Harkness, they had assumed that he would think himself safe and just walk out and be killed. Blinky Moran's warning had kept him alerted, and—

He buckled on his belt and patted his Colt gratefully. After all, when you come right down to facts, his sixgun had been his salvation. He patted the holstered gun again and spoke to it as one trusted friend to another. "Looks like me an' you have got ourselves looped, but we ain't hawg-tied yet; we'll hafta try an' make out, some way."

Red shook his tarp and blanket partially free from hay and, after adding the slicker, worked it into a loose roll, intending to pack it more correctly when daylight came. After removing the pitchforks from the opening, he draped the roll over his left shoulder and dropping his free hand from rung to rung as he descended, he crabbed down the rickety ladder. His feet were on the bottom rung when a big hand grabbed his collar and a hard tube was pressed against his spine. Behind him, Ord gave voice to his now-familiar order, "Stay put."

Caught completely helpless, Red was willing to take a chance, but there was no chance. With breast and hips pressed tightly against the ladder, he could neither heave backward nor crook an elbow to get at his holster. He felt his bowels crawl, and he seemed to be sweating ice-water through his palms and under his armpits, as he realized that no maneuver on his part could have even a slim hope of success, so long as that gun bored against his kidneys. It was certain that he would die if he made a move; and it was none too certain that he wouldn't die anyway. He did the only sensible thing. Somehow, he managed to keep his voice steady and appear unconcerned as he drawled, "Well, you got th' say-so. Don't keep a feller hangin' holt like a lizard on a stump; go ahead an' say what."

"Just stay put," Ord grunted.

"Stay put, eh?" Red aped him. "Seems like that's the biggest part of yur conversation since we met up. Yuh ought to be able to dig some other idea outa that two-bit mind of yours, if yuh try real hard. That don't seem possible, but yuh never can tell."

The sheriff refused to become heated. "I'll have a plenty to say later," he said, equably. "Right now, just stay—"

"Don't say it! If yuh do, I'll scream," Red protested, then subsided. Out of a corner of his eye, he had seen two men come from the office. In the lead, old Linton was carrying his sooty-globed lantern; behind him, Deputy-sheriff Bill Haskell's gargoyle face grinned malevolently.

"And Satan came also," Red remarked with a detached air. Knowing that when argument starts, shooting usually is postponed for a time, he was trying to start an argument—just any kind of an argument that might create a diversion and give him even a small chance to make his draw.

No good. Seeming to sense what Red had in mind, Ord turned on a little more power, pinning Red to the ladder more tightly than ever. "Reach around an' git his gun, Bill," he ordered.

THOUGH nicely boxed in, Red Thurman still was playing for time —and an opportunity. He twisted his body slightly to the left, and slyly pinned his holster so tightly against a rung of the ladder that the deputy was unable to fumble the gun out. "Unbuckle it, dammit," Ord snapped, im-

patiently. "We can't monkey-doodle around here all day; got ridin' to do."

"Aw, hell," Haskell grumbled, disgustedly. "Lemme bend my six over th' geezer's skull; reckon that'll learn him not to—"

"I said unbuckle it," Ord cut in. "From what I hear around town, a good many folks kinda like this waddy. Somebody may be watchin' from th' street, fur all we know. I don't want it said that, with three of us close-herdin' him, an' havin' a cold drop at that, we hadta buffalo him before we dast try to jug him.

"Git that belt loose. If yuh can't unbuckle it, cut th' damn thing, an' let's git goin'."

For some reason he couldn't have defined, Red didn't want that belt cut, so he slyly twisted his hips enough to allow Haskell to unbuckle the belt. When it dropped, Haskell picked it up and rebuckled it, then hooked his left arm through it.

They started, Ord on Red's left, Haskell to his right, each gripping his arm with one hand and holding a gun in the other. When they had nearly reached the street, there was another delay, Ord being responsible, this time. In the semi-darkness, the sheriff had glanced through the open-roller door, just as a half-dozen possemen jingled past, headed for the meeting place at his office.

"Listen, Thurman," he said gruffly, in an attempt to speak placatingly, "if yuh'll promise not to—"

"Nothing stirrin' but th' breeze," Red cut in. "Only thing I'm promisin' is that I'm gonna balk plumb tenacious unless yuh tell me what all of this is about."

"Awright," Ord conceded, "here's th' indictment—yuh might say a string of indictments.

"First off, th' stage was helt up an' a man kilt, an' there yuh was—maybe after th' killin', maybe before."

"We talked that over once, an' I don't chaw my hash twice," Red said. "Anyway, Jim Randall an' his girl will tell yuh that—"

"They ain't told me nawthin' yet, so I'll wait till they do. Puttin' that to one side, though, yuh kilt Sam Hendricks; an' we only got yur word fur it that he shot first. Before that, yuh had a run-in with Harkness, an' was already to crack down on him. Like I told yuh, yuh seem to be in th' clear on them two—but that's only a seem-to-be. Seems like everywhere yuh go, somethin' breaks bad.

"F'rinstance, yuh was hangin' around th' front door of th' saloon watchin' Reynault cache heavy money in his safe. Some time between then and now, somebody broke into th' blacksmith shop, stole a sledge an' a crowbar,. busted inta th' saloon and tried to git inta Reynault's safe."

"Does Reynault think I done it?"

"Naw; he thinks yuh didn't. But he ain't doin' th' sheriffin', so I'll do th' thinkin'."

Red raised his arms and spread his legs. "Search me plumb complete; if yuh find a sledge an' a crowbar on me, I'll confess."

"Yuh're a cool jigger," Ord said with a touch of grudging admiration. "Maybe cool enough to pull off th' big job of th' night."

"Meanin' what?" Something in Ord's tone made Red uneasy.

The sheriff seemed more sure of his ground now. "Right after yur ruckus with Hendricks, Lon Henderson left th' saloon to go to th' bank. Young Gilmore, th' feller who was workin' on his books, sez Henderson got there awright, sent Gilmore on home, and waited to close ev'rything up.

"He done that, awright, but when he come out an' turned to lock th' front door, somebody blowed off th' hull back of his head."

ORD SHRUGGED his massive shoulders. "Well, there it is again, feller; yuh was right there or thereabouts."

"No I wasn't," Red denied, promptly. "I wasn't there at all; I was awready bedded down. Linton knows that, 'cause he seen me an' talked to me."

"Yeh," Ord agreed, "he seen yuh an' palavered with yuh; but he's willin' to swear that yuh come in right *after* the shot was fired up by th' bank."

"That's th' way it was," Linton said, stolidly, when Red looked at him in surprise. "I was settin' on my bunk playin' solytaire, an' I heared a shot up on th' bank corner. Then yuh come in an' grabbed yur bedroll and hustled right up into th' mow. I went out an' looked around but they wasn't another damn human in th' street nowheres, so I hunted Ord up an' told him what I knowed an' we went an' found th' body. Then Ord laid fur yuh."

"So there it is," Ord said, smugly. "This time, I got witnesses. Yuh was seen comin' this way when nobody else was, just before th' shootin'; an' Linton knows that yuh come in here right after th' shootin', nobody else bein' anywheres around. Now what yuh gonna say about all that?"

"Not a lot to say, right now, except that Linton is a snake-minded, gopher-voiced, scabby-eyed, crooked-tongued liar. I mean a hundred percent liar, without no discount off for cash."

"Comin' from you, that don't mean much," Ord said. He fingered his spade of beard uncertainly for a moment, then added, "Course if yuh got anything more to say, go ahead an'—"

"I'm sayin' this much more, an' sayin' it plenty loud," Red told him. "Yuh seem to be tryin to round up that gang of stagers an' rustlers, an' I can name you three of 'em, right now.

"Harkness is one of 'em, Hendricks is—or was—another." He pointed at Linton. "An' this shriveled-up chunk of rotten crow-bait is another."

When Linton only blinked at him, he turned back to Ord: "Bein's yuh seem to have yur head set—an' folks tell me it's a plumb stubborn head, at that—I don't reckon it does any good for me to tell yuh these things. I'll just hafta wait an' tell it to th' jury."

"What jury?" Ord said, ominously.

§ 8 §

RED THURMAN could see plainly that the sheriff was uneasy in his mind, but, try as he might and did, Red couldn't puzzle out the cause of Ord's apparent mental worriment. The big officer had set a trap and caught his game. Why didn't he tuck Red away, or kill him under some pretext, and finish an unpleasant task?

The fact was that Ord was considering his own prestige. This was to be a big day for him. Another glance down the street showed him that at least fifty men were massed in front of his office, ready to ride under his orders; he would pick up at least that many more before the five o'clock deadline. To be the boss of a hundred men or more was an attractive prospect to him.

Though he couldn't understand the reason, he knew that Red had made an astonishing number of friends, in one short day, and that many of the townsmen wouldn't approve of his arrest.

On the other hand, Ord knew that Lon Henderson had hosts of friends who would demand quick punishment for his murderer, and that they would assume that Bob Ord was living up to his reputation for getting the right man—when he got anyone. Old Bob might be a mite slow, but they'd say he makes few mistakes. He has arrested the feller, so the feller is guilty.

An actual clash between the two forces was not improbable, but Ord didn't want it to come on his big day in the limelight.

Then, too, there were many accounts

to settle with small-time hide-thieves, and frying-pan rustlers, who holed up in the rough country over southwestward; some of them ought to be nabbed in the big circle-hunt he intended to pull off.

Considering everything, Ord almost wished that he hadn't made the arrest, at this time, and what to do next was something of a puzzle. While he was thinking that over, he thought he had found the solution. Glancing diagonally across the street, he saw the shutter-doors of the *Elite* swing open, and Blinky Moran appear on the walk.

The bartender had tucked his apron up beneath its strings and was idling on the walk, smoking a long black cigar and looking up and down the street in a detached way. He lacked customers.

An idea commenced to form in the sheriff's mind and, as was his custom, he turned it about and looked at it from all angles. Also, as was his custom, when he got the idea enlarged and fixed, he shed off all uncertainty and went into action with a rush.

"Linton," he barked, "you wait here exactly five minutes, then go down to my place an' tell them possemen to hustle up to th' saloon an' have a snifter or two, on me. Tell Reynault I'll charge it up on my expense account —medical supplies, yuh know.

"Tell th' boys I'll be along d'rectly. Have 'em wait fur me in front of th' saloon."

He looked outside again. Blinky had gone back in and no one was in sight in the street. He gave Red a shove and said to Haskell, "Git a hustle on; we'll haze this jasper across an' hole up behind th' hotel till the crowd leaves, then circle an' hit th' jail from behind.

"Main trick will be to hustle across an' git into th' alley 'fore somebody drifts up this way an' sees us."

"Suppose I don't feel like hustlin'," Red objected.

"Suit yurself," Ord said. Red understood what was left unsaid, and didn't like it. He decided that he wasn't going into that jail alive. If a break came, he'd take advantage of it; if nothing broke in his favor before they reached the jail, he'd make a long-odds gamble, fighting as best he could and as long as he could.

DOWN AT the foot of Main, there was some light from the lamps of the saloon and Ma Pearson's hotel, and a lantern glowed feebly in front of the sheriff's office; but the north end of the block still was dark. They shoved and hauled Red across to the east side, then took him between Grimes' boot-shop and the poolhall and on back to the alley, where they went south along the alley until they were back of the hotel. There the sheriff called a halt and stood, shifting his feet uneasily, cursing old Linton for what Red thought must be at least an hour. It may have been ten minutes.

Then Linton's cracked voice rose, delivering the sheriff's message, word for word, as a small boy declaims in school.

The effect was immediate. Someone made a gruff wisecrack and the crowd laughed uproarously as they headed for the saloon, some in saddle, some leading their horses. Ord cursed deep-chestedly again when he noted that the lantern was left behind and still lighted. "Damn fool Linton orter took it along," he grumbled. "Might show us up when we cross this side street."

However, they crossed without being noticed and went on south till they had the jail building between them and the light. Still wondering why the sheriff was so secretive, Red plodded along through the darkness, all the way braced for the fight he was determined to make—and all the way deterred by the two guns that bore relentlessly against his spine. He would go down, of course, but he would go down like a man. When the rear of the jail sud-

denly loomed before them, inky-black against its murky background, he knew that he was facing his last chance to make a try.

His eyes having become somewhat accustomed to the semi-darkness, Red saw that they had halted before a narrow door, with a single step before it. "Stay put, feller," Ord grunted, then released his hold on Red's shoulder and fumbled out a bunch of keys with his left hand. "He's all yours, Bill," he said gruffly; "hold him till I git this door unlocked."

Call it Providence, fate, blind luck or what you will, it chanced that whatever force sometimes intervenes to control human destiny in a split instant, willed in Red's favor, now. For he already had braced his feet wide apart and was on the verge of twisting and writhing in an effort to free himself from the deputy, when he heard a thumping sound behind him and felt Bill slide silently to a sitting posture, clutch feebly at Red's ankles, then topple sidewise and away.

It was puzzling, but Red did not waste a moment trying to find the answer; instead he gave his entire attention to Ord, who had inserted a key and was in the act of turning it. He still had his gun in his right hand, but its muzzle was not against Red—though Red didn't know where it was.

Always slow minded, it took Ord the better part of a second to realize that something had gone wrong. During that fraction of a second, Red swivelhipped away from the gun-barrel, stooped low, grabbed an ankle and heaved backward and upward with every ounce of his muscle.

It was too much for even the big sheriff's massive strength. Jerked off-balance, he fell heavily and awkwardly, landing face-down on the stone step with a grunt of pain and surprise. Game through and through, he wallowed to a sitting posture and started to bring his gun to bear, only to crumple and sag down beside his deputy when Red kicked him, first in the stomach, then in the throat, then in the forehead as, one at a time, those areas came within reach.

UNDER THE circumstances, Red felt justified in punishing relentlessly, and did just that until Ord's fingers relaxed, freeing the gun he had had no opportunity to use. Red pounced on it, tucked it inside his shirt and grabbed up his own belt and gun from where Haskell had dropped them.

Knowing only that he had a friend there, Red had been too busy to take a look to his rear; but he did that when a thin nasal voice sounded back of him: "Pretty fair-to-middlin' scrapper, you. Can't say that yuh fight plumb ethical an' considerate, but yuh git results, an'—"

Enlightened at last, Red fairly whooped. "Grouchy, yuh danged old salamander, how in th' big how did yuh show up here?"

"Rid in headed fur th' feedlot to meet a certain red-headed he-catamount. Bein' afeard that Ord might spot me an' deputize me, I come in by the alley door an' seen yuh fellers startin' to make th' big parade. My massive intellect tellin' me that yuh was headed fur here, I sashayed down th' alley on th' west side an' had yuh headed, when yuh got here. Thought yuh might need a mite of help, but now, after watchin' yuh work on Ord, I ain't so sure. Might be yuh'd have licked both of 'em, guns an' all."

"Glad yuh didn't figger that way at th' time," Red said. "Until yuh horned in, I didn't have no more chance than a slick-eared dogie up to his eyes in quicksand, an' with a rockslide comin' his way. So, thanks a plenty, an' then some."

"No thanks comin'," Grouchy assured him. "Fur ten years or more, I bin just achin' fur an excuse to work Bill Haskell over; now I'm happy."

"I feel plumb happy myself," Red told him, "but I got a strong hunch

that if we wanta stay happy, we better cache these limber hombres inside an' light a shuck outa this man's town."

"Ord always keeps a lantern an' th' keys to th' cells hangin' on a nail inside this door," Grouchy said. "Wait a secont an' I'll make like a one-man committee on arrangements."

The old driver went inside and located the lantern. After he had lighted it, he set it on the floor where its light wouldn't shine on the north windows and came back out, grinning and jingling the cell keys. "Ev'rything's all hunky dory," he reported. "Ord likes to be a leader, so we'll take him first, an'—"

Bill Haskell partially revived and commenced wobbling around on his hands and knees, moaning like a tree frog. Grouchy nonchalantly kicked him back of the ear with the heel of his boot and he collapsed again.

Grouchy scratched his craggy jaw judgmatically. "Le's see, I ain't got a chanct to check my books, but I believe that squares accounts twixt me an' Bill.

"When I give him th' butt, an' knocked him loose from yur spine, that paid him off fur ringin' in a cold deck on me in a poker game th' year McKinley was elected th' first time; an' this love-tap I just give him goes fur interest on said poker debt.

"Yeah, I reckon we're 'bout even. Just to be shore, though, I reckon I'll wait till he perks up some—then whang him one on th' nose, fur good measure."

"Th' court rules that th' motion is over-ruled," Red told him. "We ain't got time to audit yur books, right now. Ketch holt of Ord's feet an' I'll take his shoulders."

"Reckon yur r i g h t," Grouchy agreed, reluctantly, "but that nose of Bill's shore is an awful temptation."

They dragged the two inside and dumped them on the floor of a cell; as a last artistic touch, Grouchy manipulated the sheriff's spurred heels so that they rested on Bill's nose. When Ord moved, Bill would, too.

After locking the cell and the outer door, Red threw the keys up on the flat roof of the building. "Now, where's yur hawse?" he asked, briskly.

"Ground-hitched, a little ways down th' cross street."

"Go fork him an' git out of here. Don't hurry; just jog down Main plumb unconcerned, an' nobody'll pay yuh no mind. After yuh've crossed th' crick, head into th' stage road an' just amble along till I ketch up with yuh."

9

RED THURMAN moved fast, knowing that one or the other of the two officers might a w a k e and raise a hullabaloo at a n y moment. Jogging down the alley by the route he had come, he r e a c h e d Main and was starting across when Ord's heavy voice came with a roar that re-echoed up the canyon of false-fronted buildings. "Come a-runnin', ev'rybody! Bust me outa this damn jail!"

Almost simultaneously, Bill Haskell loosed a wild screech of pain that proved that the sheriff's spurs had done what Grouchy had planned.

No use to be furtive now; Red sprinted across and opened the big roller door of the feed-barn. He was still undiscovered, because the men who were pouring from the saloon immediately headed for the jail with the confused and purposeless yammering of a leaderless crowd. To add to the turmoil, Ord or Bill started to bang mightily on the bars of the north window of the jail. With that noise added to the bellowing of the more excited members of the posse, Sandstone Junction became a bedlam that temporarily benumbed the reasoning powers of its

citizens. As he got his gear from the office and raced for Pard's stall, Red grinned when he considered that the sheriff's precautions against being seen making the arrest were working in favor of his prisoner now. Not fifty yards away, enough men were in the street to seal the feed barn inside a human wall, in a matter of seconds; but they didn't know Red had escaped, or even had been arrested.

Then Red suddenly became less self-assured when he remembered that there was one man in town who *did* know the situation, and would act, sooner or later—later, Red hoped.

Anyone who has tried saddling a horse in haste and under pressure knows that that simple task seems to take an hour. It's actually done within a minute, if the man on the job doesn't allow himself to become flustered—in which case latigo straps become tangled; cinchrings sway out of reach; and, infected by his master's nervousness, the horse tramples about, restlessly.

None of that for Red Thurman. "C'mon out, Old-Timer," he called casually, opening the stall door. When Pard obeyed, nickering a low welcome, Red slid the blanket into place, then the saddle. He had tightened the front cinch snugly and was working the latigo of the rear girth through its upper ring when bootheels welted the walk out front and Linton's cracked voice came: "This way, fellers! Come a-runnin'! That red-headed geezer is in there gittin' his hawse! I know, 'cause I left this door shet an' now it's open!"

That did it. There were answering shouts, the roll of bootheels on plank walks, and somebody down by the stage station commenced shooting at nothing.

Red didn't linger. With the rear latigo strap but once through its upper ring, he let it dangle, knowing that the cinch would work loose soon, but not at once. Abandoning his bedroll, and without waiting to slip the bridle on, he swung into saddle and knee-guided the stallion toward the front at a brisk trot—just as the big door commenced to move on its squeaking rollers, and Linton could be seen leading it into place.

It was touch and go. Prompted by a light gig of a spur and Red's voice, and guided by Red's familiar knee-grip, Pard leaped into full speed in one stride and hurtled toward the slowly-closing gap.

Still gibbering for help, badly rattled and not a little afraid to have Red go free, Linton let go of the door and tried to block the gap with his body, swinging his hat in the racing horse's face and yipping "Whoa, boy! Whope! Whoa, boy," in a high strained voice.

LINTON knew horses, but he had not been introduced to this one. Keeping straight on, increasing instead of slackening speed, Pard struck the howling man with his shoulder, shunting him across the plank ramp and into the ditch as a plow turns crumbling soil off its lay. Knee-guided to the left after leaving the ramp, the big horse surged northward up the street like a great gold-white missile.

Minutes before, Sandstone Junction had been a bedlam; now it became an erupting volcano of assorted noises. Bootheels of running men rang hollowly on the board walks; some of the possemen yelled angrily, some yelled inquiringly; some just yelled. The Baptist church bell—which also was the fire alarm—added its clamor to the din. Even above that uproar, Ord's voice rose, "Jailbust! Shoot 'im!"

Fortunately for Red, it was the more excitable members of the posse who commenced shooting wildly—so wildly that down by the hotel a horse screamed and buck-jumped across the street—struck by a bullet that couldn't be said to have strayed, because it wasn't aimed for anybody in particular.

But now, caught up by that inex-

plicable mob psychology that prompts one man to do what he sees another man do, the cooler heads in the crowd came into action—shooting to hit someone.

Sensing the change when bullets commenced horneting around him, Red bent low over the horn and set Pard to zig-zagging till they reached the bank corner, where the light still was elusive. Turning left there, he crossed the railroad and hit the creek bridge with a rumble of hooves that sounded almost like a salvo of artillery. Rocketing up the incline on the far side, Red stopped the stallion with his voice and patted his sleek neck. "Good work, Old-Timer! Them gazabos back there know it's no use to try runnin' us down, once yuh git lined out proper."

"K'reckt," Grouchy's cracked voice sounded in the fringe of brush bordering the trail and he rode into sight, forking a gaunty, grey gelding that was boney and low-headed, but nevertheless had its good points.

"K'reckt," Grouchy repeated. "But what I wanta know is do yuh always leave town with yur shirttail a-buzzin' on sich a high note?

"Another big ringtailed question is, do you ride th' hawse, or does the hawse ride you? Reason I ask is, I see yuh're th' one that wears the bridle."

Red grinned a bit sheepishly, realizing that he still was carrying the bridle looped over his head with the browband on the nape of his neck and bit dangling by his watch-fob.

"Such a fool question," he chided, soberly. "I thought yuh knowed that me an' this oldtimer was full pardners. That bein' so, we take turn about doin' th' reinin'. Comin' to think of it, it's my turn now; so hold still, feller, while I put yur bonnet on."

Red put the sorrel into a long lope, with Grouchy's polka-dotted grey lumbering alongside. Peeping over the eastern rim, the sun appeared to shove the light cloud-mass out of its way and transform the dew on the plain into a fleecy mist—which, in turn, was wafted away by the light prairie breeze. Sunlight was gilding the tips of the southwestern pinnacles when they left the sandy footing and took to the rock country. They were in among the boulders when Red reined the big chestnut to a walk.

"Well what do yuh know?" Grouchy ejaculated, squinting a shrewd grey eye at a bedraggled figure that had appeared on the trail. "Danged if it ain't that orphant chink that was with us in th' hold-up! Reckon he's what a feller might call th' human snail. Took him nigh on sixteen hours to come less than a mile, an' th' trip 'pears to have tuckered him plumb out. 'Sides that, he somehow managed to git hisself mired in on a road that's as dry as preachin', with only one crick to cross, an' it bridged."

ON THE FACE of things, the old driver's caustic remarks were amply justified. When the Chinese stepped off the trail and stood bowing diffidently and smiling his obsequious celestial smile, they saw that his flowing silk trousers and smock were mud-plastered and brush-torn, and that his ridiculous strap-toed slippers were mere remnants of cloth and leather. His silk cap was gone, his queue awry.

Red reined to a stop and appraised the dejected apparition in silence for a time, then drew a roll of bills from his hip pocket and peeled one off. "Yuh look kinda out of luck, feller. If a fiver will help—"

"No-no," the bemired fellow said, backing off a little and drawing his hands into his voluminous sleeves. "Wu Fang glot plenty money. Hell! Plenty-plenty money! Damn." He swung his arms in an expansive gesture and managed another wan smile. "Wu Fang glot muchee-muchee cash money, all samee banker man. What th' Hell!"

"Pleased to meet yuh, Mr. Wolf Fang," Grouchy said, eyeing him skep-

tically. "It's plumb comfortin' to know that if I happen to wanta borrow a few thousand bucks, I know who to go see. Thinkin' it over, I find that I'm a little short, right now, so—"

"Lay off him," Red objected, a bit sharply. "Even a mole-eyed old wampus like you oughta be able to see that he's about all in."

He turned to Wu Fang, who stood turning his gaze from one to the other of them. "Don't believe I'd mosey inta town lookin' like yuh do; folks might talk."

"Melican man allee time talkee-talkee, anyway," Wu said, philosophically. "Me go Slandstlone Junctlion when dark come. Vlisit Chinee fliend, gittee plenty clean clothes, eatee plenty chuck, sleepee velly much, drinkee rlice wine. Damn! Hell!"

Grouchy shook his shaggy head doubtfully. "Judgin' from th' progress yuh've made up to now, don't believe yuh kin make it to town tonight, or tomorrow night, neither."

"Yuh can't tell about th' works of a watch by lookin' at th' case," Red said to Grouchy, as they started on. "On top of that, old hawse, if yuh meet up with Wu again, as a favor to me, treat him like he was human."

"What fur?" Grouchy wanted to know. "I've seen a few chinks in my time, but I never figgered they was human. Anyway, what do yuh know about this Wolf Fang galoot?"

"You'd be surprised," Red said, sententiously.

Boxed Horshoe proved to be little short of a model ranchstead. They rode past the big, rambling, wide-eaved house with its vine-canopied porches and neatly-kept flowerbeds. There was a big barn set in a cluster of sturdy outbuildings and a comfortable-looking bunk-house, with a shed-roofed chuck-room running its full length. Though every building was in a good state of repair and neatly painted, Red shook his head disparagingly after giving the layout a quick inspection. Like a ship whose cargo has shifted, the place was big and strong, but off-balance. Not enough mounts in the saddle corral; not enough forage in the haylot; no riders coming in or going out on the incidental errands that are inevitable in a well-stocked ranch of that size.

Grouchy reflected Red's verdict when, after looking all around, he said, glumly, "Some layout, an' then some. But she makes me think of a 45-90 gun loaded with 22-shorts. She's awmost a ghost ranch—th' ghost of a big, fine spread, but jist a ghost, all th' same."

"Resurrectors, that's us," Red said, cheerfully. "Let's go find Randall an' commence to bring th' place back to life."

"Awright, Gabriel, commence blowin' yur trumpet an' I'll accompany yuh on a jewsharp," Grouchy agreed. "I'm suggestin', though, that yuh don't wake this place up same way yuh did th' Junction."

Red gave him a long, level look. "I hate to say it, Grouchy, but if I was you, I'd just ooze back to town and make it a point to keep about a mile between you an' me. I don't think Ord or Bill Haskell ketched sight of yuh down by th' jail, so yuh're all in th' clear."

"Think again, feller," Grouchy came back. "All my life, I bin a peaceful, law-abidin' citizen, an' it got monotonous. Now I'm a burrheaded outlaw an' it suits me just fine. F'rinstance, just think of th' fun I got outa workin' Bill Haskell over, especially th' sweet music he made when Ord's spurs c'menced bitin'.

"Just you go ahead with yur rat-killin', an' don't try to cheat me outa my share of th' sport."

THEY FOUND Randall fitting a new brace into the gate of the horse

corral. "Hello, fellers," he greeted them; "slide down and cool your saddles."

Dismounting, Red stripped the gear off the stallion and shouldered it. "Reckon I better keep him in a box stall," he said, casually.

Randall didn't wink an eyelash. "Fifty a month," he said, getting out his timebook, "commencin' right now. Plenty of box stalls in the far end of the barn."

Mischief glinted in the rancher's eyes when Grouchy opened the gate to chouse in the gelding he had been quietly stripping. "Awright," he said, commencing to write again. "Potato peeler. . . twenty per till you've learned to handle the job."

" 'Tater peeler, hell," Grouchy sputtered. "Dang your hide, I was spankin' a saddle on this range before you ever seen it. If yuh've got any particularly spooky jobs of line-ridin', I'm your man."

"All the riding here is plenty spooky," Randall was saying as Red rejoined them.

The rancher sighed heavily, then changed the subject abruptly. "You fellers been to breakfast yet?"

"Not any," they answered in unison.

Randall grinned at their eagerness. "Ain't et yet myself. Soon as I get this brace nailed, we'll go over to the big house, and—"

"Gimme that hammer," Red broke in, grabbing the tool from the rancher and commencing to pound lustily. Two minutes later, Randall nodded his satisfaction after giving the gate an experimental swing, then led the way to the house.

Although he had proved exceptionally fast at mending a gate, or saddling a horse or triggering a sixgun, Red was remarkably slow at washing at the bench on the west porch. In fact, Randall and Grouchy had gone through the kitchen and into the diningroom before Red finished slicking down his fiery mane and entered the kitchen—where he had heard Maysie working at the range.

On this particular morning, the girl was distinctly feminine—Miss Dignity, wearing her "company manners." She answered Red's cheery, off-hand greeting with a formal "Good morning, Mr. Thurman." Her long chestnut lashes swept down to veil the violet eyes as she added, demurely, "Not wishing to be uncivil, I must say that I can't imagine what brought you out here, so soon."

"It's th' scenery," Red informed her, gazing at her steadily. "I got a artistic temperament an' like to get a eyeful of real beauty."

"Breakfast is on the table as soon as I bring the biscuits," she said, opening the oven door and reaching in. "I believe the others are waiting for you. I'll pour the coffee in a moment."

"I hope that coffee is plenty hot," Red told her. "Somehow the air in here seems to be plumb chilly." He caught the coffeepot off the back end of the range. "Go ahead with them biskits an' I'll fetch this Java. Teamwork, yuh know."

"I wasn't aware that we were a team," she said, caustically.

"Well, maybe we ain't—yet," Red conceded.

Her eyes opened wide and her forehead puckered in puzzlement. "You have a vivid imagination, Mr. Thurman. Out of courtesy, I'll refrain from saying that you appear somewhat conceited."

"Maybe so," Red conceded. "Seems like I'm a little loco—but there's a reason."

"Oh-oh," Randall chuckled when they appeared at the table. "Another good man gone wrong, Grouchy. Over at the chuck-kitchen, volunteer help just ain't; but here, Maysie's ruined

many a first-class rider makin' a bum second cook."

The rancher's voice and manner suddenly grew heavy. "Grouchy tells me that you've had a bad run-in with Ord, Thurman. Maybe you better sober down, for once, and tell me how come you and the sheriff locked horns."

While they ate the ham and eggs and potatoes, Red told all that had occurred at the Junction. When he had finished, the rancher gave him a slow, appraising look. "And, after doin' all that to Bob Ord, you figger on settlin' down here—only fifteen miles from a rip-snorter of a sheriff who's bound to paint up and go on the warpath, with a particular craving for your scalp. Ain't you afraid Ord'll come lathering out here after you?"

Red looked unworried. "Of course I might be wrong, but my idea is that you're th' kind of feller that runs his own ranch—Ord or no Ord."

The rancher's honest face registered approval. "And you're plumb right, at that, Son. I have my troubles, but the day ain't come yet when anyone can come to the Boxed Horshoe and take a man unless I say so."

Then he added, less heartily, "I don't want to get Ord on the prod, though. He's a right good friend of mine; besides, he's the law, and I like to live legal. Maybe I better shag down to town and see if I can't smooth his hair down a little. You know how he is, though. Always wears his authority in plain sight and all that.

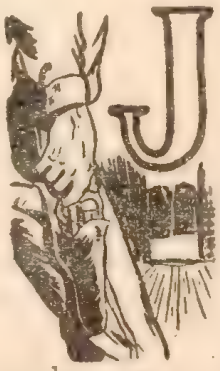
"It's a tough proposition, but I'll give it a big try." Randall shook his head resignedly. "Seems like making big tries is about all I do, these days.

"Putting Ord to one side, though, while I'm gone, you two just look things over here and talk with the boys till you get things sized up. Maybe when you've learned the layout and what you're up against, you'll decide that there are healthier ranches hereabouts."

"I'm stickin', regardless," Red announced, meeting the girl's glance across the table.

"An' I gotta stay to look after Red," Grouchy said. "A helpless pilgrim like him hasta have somebody to steer him straight, when he's cut loose from his ma's apronstrings."

10



JIM RANDALL rose at dawn and made himself fit for town by donning a hairy calfskin vest, and flaring red sleeve garters, and buttoning his blue flannel shirt at wrists and throat. Visiting the chuck shack as the punchers were washing up for breakfast, he ordered a team hitched to the buckboard, and was turning away when Red Thurman detained him. "If yuh don't mind, I wish yuh'd deliver a letter for me," Red said, handing over a thick envelop. "It's for Joe Blake, th' express agent. Maybe I ought to tell yuh that—"

"Come on over to the house and eat with me," Randall invited. "We can talk at the table; saves time."

Again Red took his time at the wash basin. Again, he stopped in the kitchen to tease Maysie; this time, she surprised him by meeting him half way. "If I were not afraid of inflating your ego, I'd say that, for an exceedingly homely man, you're fairly good looking, yourself," she told him. "Understand, I had to say something like that; otherwise, you'd keep on fishing for compliments, and I'd have you around underfoot indefinitely. You had better go on in, now. I think Father will be growing impatient."

"Over at the bunkhouse, you was saying something about this letter you're sending to Blake," Randall prompted, as they commenced eating.

"Fact is," Red said, with a side-glance at the girl, "I'm askin' Blake to use his influence to git me a job ridin' guard. Reckon he'll say yes, as I don't figger there'll be many other fellers with a cravin' for th' job."

Showing a light heat-flush, Randall buttered a square of cornbread evidently to give himself time to control his temper before answering. "Reckoned you wanted to ride for me, or I wouldn't have taken you on," he grumbled, finally, looking more than a little miffed.

"I wouldn't chide him, Father," the girl contributed, all acid again. "After all, he's a stranger to us, so we have no reason to expect him to take a job that he knows is dangerous."

Red gave her a long, level look. "As I was about to explain when you socked yur stinger into me, I'll make yuh a good hand as long as I'm here. I don't expect to hold that stage job permanent. All I figger on is to make a trip or two, just to demonstrate that it can be done. Later on, I may guard regular. A young feller hasta look after his future."

"Humph," Randall grunted, "you ain't got much future if you think you can ride into the Junction, facing Bob Ord; he'll gut-shoot you, on sight."

"Might be," Red admitted, "but as the Turks say, what is to be will be, whether it comes to pass or not. Anyway, I'm sendin' th' letter; then when I get all square with that numb-brained sheriff I'll be in line for a job."

"Well, if you're hell-bent on committing suicide, I'll carry the letter," Randall said heavily. Appearing to have lost his appetite, he pushed back his chair and fumbled in his vest pocket for his quill toothpick. "Got a little messing around to do before I start. Take your good time and eat plenty. You and Grouchy better ride over the place today and get a map of it into your heads—that is, if you think it's worth while to do that, when you may not be here, or anywhere else, for more than a few days, if Bob Ord ketches sight of you, off this ranch."

AFTER RANDALL had left, Red continued to eat, phlegmatically. He looked across the table at the girl and she looked at the tablecloth, her pert nose in the air. "Outlaws barred as assistant dishwashers here?" he asked.

"Decidedly yes," she answered icily; "I think you need a rest after the strain of writing that precious letter."

"But yuh let me help a little bit the other day."

"That was before you started looking for a job somewhere else."

"But, yuh see it's this way. I—"

"If you'd like to write some more applications, you'll find pen ink and paper in Dad's office. And, if you'll excuse me, I have work to do. I work right here on the Boxed Horshoe, you know."

"Women," Red said eloquently, after she had shown him her trim back and left.

Guided by Fatty Sanger, (so called because he was 6-4 and weighed 130) the two friends jogged westward through the horse pasture, passing stock such as they never had seen before, on a ranch. "The mares weigh 1350 and there are over 200 of them," Fatty said, pridefully. "There's six Percheron studs that cost the Boss a thousand per each. Counting the young stuff down to sucklings, there's anyway 500 of them. The Boss sells four-year-olds and some long threes to the government at around $200 a head. Uncle Sam liking heavy ranch stuff for the artillery, knowing that ranch horses have sound wind and four good feet and four good legs. The herd would cash in like a bank draft at around a hundred thousand." Fatty was an English scholar, and liked to prove it.

They passed through a padlocked gate to which Fatty had a key, and

found the ground beyond rich and level, with high-grade Herefords scattered over good graze that never had been over-stocked. It was a stockman's Paradise, managed by a real stockman, who, however was unable to guard it adequately, too many of his riders having been dry-gulched.

When they came to a white-water creek with a rock bed, Red pulled up and turned to Fatty. "How about cross-in's?"

"Shallow rock ford about a mile below here. It heads into a trail that goes straight west over the hills, then down into Bear Creek Valley, where farmers and two-bit ranchers do right well."

"Thick settled?" Red asked, idly.

"Thick as scabs on a mangy dogie. No open graze at all; just lit-places of a section or two, all fenced tight."

"What's up-stream?"

"Another rock ford that leads into the worst badlands a man ever tried to find out anything about. Gullies and little blind canyons leading every which way, till a fellow who tries to ride through meets himself coming back. Seems like, after making that country, the good lord stood everything on edge and stirred the whole mess with something big. Come on, I'll show you."

They jogged northward, still on level footing, though some mighty convulsion of Nature had heaved up a sandstone cliffwall to form the far bank; running in height from 50 feet to less than a yard, it was streaked with fissures, and pocked with dents where rock had scaled.

After they had gone a little way, Red pulled up and pointed to a red-and-white object near the far bank, where an unusually wide fissure met the stream, at the water level. "Looks like a dead steer."

"It's one of our high grades," Fatty said. "Must have got crowded in when a bunch came here to drink, and the current carried it across and smashed it against the cliff."

"When was your last loss to th' wild bunch?" Red asked, quickly.

"About a week ago." He studied a moment then corrected himself. "I forgot; we lost a little bunch of yearlings night before last—twenty-thirty head, so I forgot about them."

Red shot another quick question. "That little draw a little above where the steer lies—does it go anywhere?"

"I suppose nobody knows," Fatty answered, then added, "I see what you're getting at, but you're off your k'whirl. The yearlings were driven across at the upper ford—the one the rustlers use every time."

"You sure they use it every time?"

"Ab-so-d a m n-l u t e l y, pos-i-damn-tootly, every time," Fatty asserted, stoutly. "Anyway, Old Sleuth, they used it night before last; we trailed them right to it and a little way on the far side, till we lost sign among the lava."

Red said nothing more, but, for several minutes, he studied the current and the cliffwall and the chute, and the dead yearling.

THE UPPER ford proved to be a rocky chute, flanked on each side by a strip where topsoil had been washed off, exposing red clay. "So long, fellers," Red said nonchalantly when they halted there. "You two bet-ter shag back to th' house before they send a rescue party after us; I'm gonna galivant around over there for a while."

"Be careful you don't galivant into bad trouble," Fatty warned. "Men have ridden across there and either got themselves lost or were unavoidably detained—to put it politely. Case you don't show up by dark, I'll hang a light on the windmill tower to guide you in."

"Needn't mind," Red said easily. "Even if I should lose the way back, Pard 'ud find it."

Red did lose the way; Pard did find

it. They arrived at the house too late for supper. That may have been a calculated delay; if it was Red achieved his purpose, for Randall had just arrived from town, so Red was invited to eat with him, again.

The girl was polite, but cool; she looked a bit nonplussed when Red adopted the same attitude. It was, "Would you like some more coffee, Mr. Thurman?" and "Yes, if yuh please, Miss Randall." She bit her lip in vexation when he thanked her elaborately after she had passed him the ham platter, unasked.

Sensing nothing unusual in this sideplay, Randall reported on his errands in town. "Gave your letter to Joe Blake, and he seemed some tickled; says he'll be out to see you, soon.

"Take Ord, though, he's got a bad case of the ringtail. He agreed not to come bulling out here after you, after I'd vetoed that plan, plumb emphatic; but he says that if he sights you anywhere off this ranch, him and his deputies will commence shooting on sight and without warning and keep it up till you stop wiggling. Worst of it is that he's imported Wyoming Bill Streeter from up Billings way, and made him a deputy. Ord says that—"

"Excuse me, Boss," Red cut in, "but let's forgit what Ord says, for th' time bein'. Pay us better to talk about a proposition I wanta make."

"Shoot it," Randall said, hopelessly.

"Awright, I wanta take a packhawse an' chuck an' beddin' an' take me a little vacation in them badlands. Be gone three days."

"There you go again. Plenty other fellers have scouted that danged eyesore on Nature; none of them ever came back. Only three months ago, Harry Sloan—best foreman I ever had—took two men and went over there. One hawse came back; that's all. Not having it in me to ask any man to take the job, I'm my own foreman now, so I'm ordering you not to—"

"Don't send after me if I don't show up on time," Red went on, as though there had been no interruption, then shot a question. "What plan have yuh got as an antydote for rustleritis?"

"None—just none at all," Randall confessed. "There's only eight of us—not countin' you—so it's foolish to think of a day-and-night guard. Only two hands ride fence in daylight; the rest stay out nights. Know any better plan?"

"Yeah. All of yuh sleep nights an' ride fence before sun-up, lookin' for cut wire."

Randall studied Red from beneath bushy brows for a moment, then said, without enthusiasm, "Somehow, I believe you know more than you're tellin', Cowboy. Anyway, you seem to think you have a plan and that's got me bested. Sleep nights and ride mornings it is. Got any more suggestions?"

"One. Stow yur saddleguns an' fix ev'ry man up with a sawed-off shotgun, with plenty of shells loaded with buckshot.

"An' now if yuh'll excuse me, I'll hit th' hay; wanta git a early start in th' mornin' an' hit th' ford before daylight."

He pushed back his chair and rose. "Goodnight, Miss Randall. Thank yuh for my good supper." He went out, leaving the girl staring after him with her lower lip compressed between teeth that looked as if they were ready to bite.

Randall jumped up suddenly and followed Red, stopping him as he left the porch for the yard. "Hey, Red! Forgot to tell you that Ord and Reynault had some kinda run-in, today. Folks say Reynault practically ordered the sheriff to stay away from him."

"Boss," Red said cryptically, "yur reports are somethin' like a woman's letter; th' most important part is in th' postscript."

RED RETURNED hours late, showing up on the fourth morning with

eyes red-rimmed by rock dust and the heat, but looking fit and alert, otherwise. The horses' coats were plastered with a paste of dried sweat and dust, and they were a bit gaunted from lack of forage, though they had had plenty of oats. "Must be water over there, after all," Randall commented, wonderingly.

"Some," Red said, equably, then added, "We'll palaver after a bit—maybe mix some medicine. Right now, I gotta take care of my hawse."

"If you haven't et yet, come over to the house, and Maysie will—"

"Thanks," Red said casually, "but I reckon Shorty will stir me up a bait here at th' shack. Be over, pretty soon."

Listening in from her position on the back porch, the girl went inside, nose elevated, skirts swishing.

After grooming every hair on Pard, and bolting a hasty breakfast, Red showed up at the house and he and Randall "pow-wowed" for an hour. Red did most of the talking, Randall contenting himself with an occasional question and many grunted "uh-huh"s and "alright"s. It was a historic conference, affecting the future of Sandstone range, and, at its conclusion, the rancher's honest face registered something approaching hopefulness.

They were about to leave the office, when there was a hail out front, and the girl ushered in Joe Blake. He was an anemic little man, with a wisp of blond moustache and a tassel of goatee at which he tugged continually while talking. He started to discuss the weather outlook, but Red was not so inclined. "This is a bizness office, so let's have what's on your mind, right off th' reel."

Blake nodded jerkily and complied. "You wrote me asking for a tryout as guard. Big money shipment on the down stage tomorrow. Thought you might get Dean to drive, and you ride shotgun, and—"

"I'll be there," Red assured him, "but Grouchy has sworn off trail-whackin', final and definite."

Blake looked no little disappointed. "Knew Dean had quit, but I thought you could—"

"Wouldn't coax him to drive again, under any circumstances," Red declared. "I'll be at Twin Crick when th' stage starts; that's all yuh get."

Shortly after Blake had eased out and away, a horse braked to a sliding stop by the porch steps and Fatty Sanger burst in, panting with excitement. "Hell to pay and no pitch hot!" he yipped. "Fence cut on the far side of the horse pasture, right in broad daylight, for the wire was all right, this morning! Anyway forty head missing!"

"Reckon you'd better get somebody to help and go fix it," Red said, calmly. "Leavin' fences down is bad ranchin'."

"Don't look at me," Randall said, when Fatty turned an amazed glance at him. "Red's my foreman, now; do what he says."

"Just fix th' fence," Red repeated, when he saw that Grouchy and a few others were coming through the hall, attracted by the excitement. "Grouchy, yuh're corral boss now. Round up ev'ry danged puncher on the place and tell 'em not to tell a human that there's been a rustlin'. Also, see to it that not a geezer leaves th' ranch today; someone might get a snootful an' talk."

After they had trooped out, Red turned to Randall. "Danged sorry I can't be with yuh when th' big show opens. Soon's Pard's had a rest, I gotta fan it for Twin Crick an' make some arrangements."

The rancher came out of his chair and gripped Red's hand. "Here's wishin' you all the luck in the world."

"Better save a little luck for yourself," Red advised. "It could be, though, that both of us will win out.

"In fact, it just *hasta* be that way, no matter how tough things look."

11

SANDSTONE JUNCTION was on tip-toe, again. The stage from Twin City was a few minutes overdue, but an incoming rider had reported seeing its dustcloud behind him a mile or so, when he turned into Main Street.

The news that it carried a heavy currency shipment had leaked out, and the question was, had there been a hold-up? Everybody at the Junction wanted to see that question answered. Joe Blake appeared before the stage station to tug at his goatee and tramp up and down before his place, then cross to walk a beat nervously before Ma Pearson's hotel. Something in his demeanor communicated itself to the townsmen who lined the walks; and when the stage did appear around the bank corner with its customary flourish, there was a concentrated rush into the sandy, hoof-pocked street to get a close view.

The crowd stopped, looked and listened when Joe Blake gave his little beard a final tug and left the walk to yip excitedly to a bewhiskered driver who had braked to a stop before the station. "Is the money-box in the boot?"

The driver spat over the wheel and bawled back, disgustedly, "Naw! They ain't no money-box in no boot! They got it an' gone!"

Blake got in one more question before his piping voice was drowned by the buzzing of the crowd. "Did they kill the guard?"

The burly driver spat explosively again, and the crowd stilled to catch his answer. "Did they kill th' guard, eh?

"Kill, hell! He wasn't anywheres around! Rid on ahead right after we started. Said he wanted to scout th' trail a little. Reckon he's a-scoutin' it till yet; leastwise, we ain't seen hide nur hair of 'im, from there to here. Yaller, that's what he is—yaller as a new-borned coyote pup."

"BUZ-Z-Z—BUZ-Z-Z! ...Bet they kilt 'im, out there! ...Naw, he just hit th' trail, maybe carryin' part of th' loot! ...Never did like th' looks of th' jigger ...That's a damn lie an' if he shows up, yuh dassent back it ...Wonder where Ord is ...Red's awright, yuh betcha."

Men formed little knots along the walks, heads in close consultation like so many football players in a huddle. In spots, the debate grew heated, and one four-man fist-fight broke out that created enough interest to cause many to overlook Distress Simpson's ore train when it snailed down the block, till the old blue lead jack was opposite the front of the hotel and the rear wheel was in front of the *Elite*. When old Distress stopped his team there simply by ceasing to yell at them and pop his long-lashed bullwhip, men billowed off the walks to pack closely about the rig—then it was discovered that Red Thurman had been riding so closely to the rear endgate of the tall-wagon that few had seen him. Now he looked all around as though mildly surprised. "Thanks for th' warm welcome," he drawled, "but will somebody tell me what all of this is about?"

With some yelling one thing and some bawling something else, they tried to tell him, finally turning the job over to shrimpy little Joe Blake, who jigged forward importantly and piped, "Where you bin? Where was you when the stage was robbed? Where'd the money go?"

Without answering, Red eased Pard over to where Blake was dancing on the edge of the walk, yanking at his goatee until he threatened to pull it out by the roots. Leaning over, Red grabbed the agent by the collar nearly throttling him as he held him up on

tiptoe and knee-guided the big horse across the street and stopped before the stage station, where he slashed his captive twice across his lean buttocks with his rein-ends. "Git inside an' stay there till I come after yuh," he grated, then appeared to forget that the agent existed.

THE JUNCTION seemed billed to undergo an unbroken succession of thrills, that day; for now Jim Randall and Grouchy Dean came boiling down Main, their stirrups cuffing as their laboring mounts ran neck-and-neck. They started to slant across and join Red, but stopped by the west walk at a motion from him.

While the spectators still were trying to grasp the significance of that maneuver, their attention was diverted by the appearance of the sheriff where the street dead-ended by his office. Ord rose in stirrups to scan the men milling in the street, briefly. Then his booming voice dominated the business section: "Lissen ev'rybody! Anybody who don't wanta git hurt better git inside, somewheres! We wanta use this street, an' anybody ketched in it one minute from now is a target!"

Readjustment was simple and quick. Red and his two friends remained as they were; the others disappeared into the stores or between buildings, only a few of the more intrepid yielding to curiosity by tucking themselves into doorways and peering out.

Then, his craggy face a thundercloud of hate and fury, Ord came on. On his right rode Wyoming Bill Streeter, his Bill Cody beard and buckskin clothing making him a fair replica of the man he sought to emulate; on his left, Bill Haskell's gargoyle face, cunning and deadly, promised the employment of any of the sly tricks for which Bill was noted.

Held to short, mincing steps, the horses of the three patted up little dust sworls as they came, slowly, steadily on, bearing down on one lone man. Some of the gaping watchers, even in that period of awful tension, could not restrain a gasp of admiration for man and horse, when—disdaining to avail himself of the shelter afforded by the big wagon—Red spoke a low order and the big sorrel stepped sidewise with the precision of a chorus girl till he reached the middle of the street. There he stopped and stood immobile—an equine statue of repressed activity, done in old bronze.

"Watch that driver, Grouchy," Red called in a cautious aside. Nodding understandingly, the old driver slid out of saddle and commenced working his way from doorway to doorway, headed for where the bewhiskered reinsman still sat on the driver's seat, now with a rifle across his knees. Probably Ord would have spotted Grouchy and guessed his intent; but he now appeared to have recognized Randall for the first time, and was giving him his entire attention.

Holding up a big hand to stop the others, he reined in and called with an assumption of heartiness, "Howdy, Jim! Better git in out of the heat! It's gonna git plenty hot here, in a minute or so!"

Jim Randall was a big man; Ord didn't want to involve him, unnecessarily.

"Being no houseplant, I reckon I can take it," Randall came back. "Also, I'm plenty curious to know where you geezers rode in from, just now."

"Thought yuh knowed we bin out huntin' them rustlers," Ord said, as though mildly surprised.

"What rustlers?"

"Why, th' ones that run off yur hawses stuff, last night."

Randall was persistent. "Who told you I had lost horses?"

"Yeah, who told yuh?" Red chimed in, obviously to divert Ord's attention from Randall.

"Heared it from sev'rul fellers;

ev'rybody an' his brother is talkin' about it."

Randall rose in stirrups and looked all around. "If there is a man here who has heard anything like that, let him speak up and tell who he got it from."

Not a man answered. Instead, there was murmured comment, and men commenced looking uncertainly and uneasily at the sheriff, who, slow-minded as usual, seemed unaware that he was being grilled.

HAVING caught a glimpse of Bill Haskell circling the burro-teams, and sneaking back between them and the walk, Red had inched Pard forward, short step after short step, until but a dozen yards lay between him and the gunmen. Touching the big horse ever so lightly with the spurs, at the same time restraining him with the reins, he had the chestnut on his toes, when, as Blinky Moran aptly put it, afterward, "There was three sideshows before th' performance in th' main tent opened."

His rugged face aflame with fighting fury for the first time in his life, Jim Randall drew and slid off on the far side of his horse, intent upon using it as a bulwark.

Instantly, Wyoming Bill cuffed out a sixgun and fired from the hip, cursing cold-bloodedly when Randall's uneasy mount tossed its head restlessly, blanketing its owner off.

Shot in the temple, the chuffy bay roper slewed sidewise, knocking Randall to the ground and pinning him helplessly.

In the same split second, and as though in accordance with a prearranged plan, the bewhiskered driver on the coach swung his rifle around and downward and it bellowed spitefully—just after Grouchy's slug had thudded into his stomach.

Almost at the same time, the batwing doors of the *Elite* slammed open and a gun roared deafening there, soundboarded by the plank walk and wooden awning. Even in that moment of stress, Red was mildly surprised when no bullet came into the street, but he took quick advantage of these diversions. With his horse already on fine edge, he loosed the reins and spoke sharply. Covering the intervening distance in three mighty bounds, Pard bared white, glistening teeth and loosed a stallion's eerie challenge; then he reared and plunged, his breast striking Wyoming Bill's powder-faced grey gelding at the girth and shunting it against Ord's paint horse, almost unseating both riders.

Still facing terrific odds, but with all of his enemies in his front again, Red whirled the stallion once more and closed with them.

Gouged out of the sandy street by scrambling hooves a cloud of fine dust spiralled lazily upward, made still more dense by the fumes of acrid, black powder Ord was using. In that cloud, the big sorrel gyrated, now seeming to flop end-to-end like a fish out of water, now spinning like a gyroscope, but always presenting an elusive, fleeting target. Lead hissed and spatted and criss-crossed; guns snarled, almost continuously; men flinched when a store windowpane tinkled down.

Then, suddenly all was silent. The lazily swirling dust settled gradually, giving the breathless watchers their first clear view of the spot.

Red Thurman sat stiffly in saddle, hit or unhit, none could say. Ord lay almost under his big paint horse's belly, with three slugs in his chest—any one of which would have cut an ordinary man down. Wyoming Bill still was mounted, but his head drooped over the saddlehorn. Over by the wagon, Bill Haskell lay on his back, his spurred heels against the wheel-spokes in which they were entangled.

The big gunfight at Sandstone was finished.

12

SILVERY-HAIRED Judge Ward rapped for order, then rose.

"Gentlemen, I needn't discuss the intolerable conditions that culminated today in a battle that brought death to some of our townsmen. At the *Elite*, Coroner Grimes viewed the bodies; but, agreeing with me that this courtroom is a more fitting place in which to hear evidence and fix responsibility; also agreeing that, as Judge of your Criminal Court, I must interest myself in this matter, he has held his verdict in abeyance, relying on this investigation to lead him to the facts.

"First, we shall go into the matter of what commonly is called 'rustling.' As it appears that he is the only loser of stock who is aware of the identities of some of the so-called rustlers, James Randall will please come forward."

Fortified by his reputation, Randall was a convincing witness. Not a man in the room doubted his truthfulness when he told of his repeated losses, then went on, "I didn't have a pale idea of how they run my stock off till Red Thurman saw a dead yearling in the creek, and started thinking things out.

"Knowing that the rustlers always used the upper ford, he spent almost four days scouting over there, finally discovering that they drove the stock about five miles west through gullies that run every which way, then bedded the stock down in a little pocket where there is water and grass enough to keep a small herd.

"With that to go on, he figured it out that the rustlers kept the stock there only overnight and the next day; next night, they brought the stuff back over the same trail and eased it quietly down stream to a big fissure just above where Red had spotted the dead yearling. So, he followed the fissure through the rough till it opened on a little park due north of Bear Creek Valley, but cut off from it by cliffs that a goat couldn't climb. There he found some of my cow stuff and some belonging to other spreads—all on good graze, waiting for rebrands to heal."

Randall's next words brought the listeners half out of their seats and caused the Judge to rap vigorously for order. "Red rode through the herd and found that every critter was fresh-marked *in Frenchy Reynault's Diamond-R brand!*"

Again, Judge Ward banged his gavel to still the commotion, then ruled, "Of course this is hearsay evidence; but, as this is but an informal inquiry, witness will proceed."

"That's about all," Randall said, "except that, knowing their system, we laid for 'em at the ford, early this morning, and filled 'em so full of buckshot that they took water and sank; so I got my horses back. Tomorrow, I'll go get my cows."

The rancher studied for a moment, then came clean. "Maybe we did spray a little lead after same was needed; but, at that, one of 'em—Sam Harkness—told how Linton killed Lon Henderson, on orders from Reynault, relayed through another man."

Judge Ward frowned judicially. "What man?"

"I hate to say it, and I hate to know it; but it was Bob Ord."

This time, the Judge made no attempt to quell the ensuing disorder, the reason being that he was as badly flustered as any of them. When the room became comparatively quiet, he passed over Randall's accusation. "We will proceed to inquire into Reynault's death."

"Reckon that elects me," Blinky Moran said, shambling forward, obviously abashed by his prominence. "I

was standin' inside th' front window, when I seen Frenchy on th' walk, holdin' a sixgun. That bein' th' first time I ever seen him with a gun, I peeked over th' shutter an' saw him linin' sights on Red—who was some busy, just then. I knowed that Red had been horned around a lot, an' that Frenchy had been in on some dirty deals. So I yelled at Frenchy, an' when he wouldn't be good, I went through th' batwings and cracked down on him, but missed, th' reason bein' that he just wasn't there no more. He didn't duck, an' he didn't jump; he just went."

He held up a short length of heavy braided silk cord. "We found Frenchy dead between th' saloon an' the pool hall, with this tight around his neck."

IMMUNE to shock now, the crowd listened quietly while Red told that he was a special agent of the express company, holding a peace officer's commission from the Governor.

On his first night in town, he spotted Reynault as one of the bandits when he picked a little raveling of towsacking off his collar, pretending it was a bug. "This Wu Fang yuh thought was just another Chinyman really come from Outer Mongolia. It's a rough country with rough men, an' Wu's th' best trailer I ever saw. I helped him out of a tight down at Alliance, an' he's followed me like a dog, ever since.

"I planted Wu on th' stage when it was robbed the other day, an', instead of headin' for town, as they thought he had, he followed sign till he found th' mazuma cached in that rock fill by th' creek bridge. It bein' too heavy to tote, he rolled it into deep water, under th' bridge. Next mornin', when me an' Grouchy met him on th' road an' I offered him money an' he turned it down, sayin' he had 'muchee muchee cash, all samee banker man,' I really was askin' if he had found th' loot, an' he was sayin' that he had.

"One thing about Wu is that in tryin' to learn to talk United States, he puts in about th' right proportion of cusswords, but he don't mix 'em in right. I'm Randall's foreman, now, so I'll take Wu to th' ranch an' let th' boys finish his education.

"Anyway, I sent word to th' agent at Twin Crick, an' he slipped out an' fished up th' dinero an' sent it on through.

"That's what made Ord an' Reynault lock horns, each thinkin' that the other had grabbed th' cash. So, when they hit th' stage today, Frenchy wasn't in on it. Ord tackled th' job on his own an' botched it. Him an' Haskell an' Wyoming Bill made th' fake hold-up, with th' help of th' driver. Joe Blake havin' tipped 'em off that I would ride shotgun—which I didn't do—they tried hard to git Grouchy to drive, so they could cut both of us down. They was so sure of downin' us that they didn't even wear masks, there bein' no passengers. I know that 'cause I took time out from guardin' th' money shipment to sneak up an' watch 'em."

Judge Ward's forehead creased. "You were guarding the shipment? My understanding was that they got it."

"They got a *box,* but there wasn't nothin' in it but some old rags. Th' money's under th' ore in Distress Simpson's wagon, with Grouchy an' some other fellers guardin' it, till th' bank opens in th' mornin'.

"That's all I know, except that it's a cinch Wu strangled Reynault; he's handy with what they call a garotte."

Judge Ward swiveled his chair and looked thoughtfully through the dusty window, then swiveled back. "So far as this court is concerned, this will be the last ever to be heard about any of the matters discussed here.

"However we have one more witness, who is in a position to verify much that we have heard."

When called, Wu minced forward, shedding his amiable smile right and

left and bowing so low before the Judge that his queue flopped down over his face. He made it short and snappy. "Evelything allee samee like Red Thurman say. Dog-gone! Red Thurman cleanee up town, chop-chop, allee samee like sloap sluds. What th' hell!"

ARRIVING at the ranch at late dusk, Randall and Red cared for their horses, then washed hurriedly at the horse trough and dried on their neckcloths.

Evidently news of what had occurred in town had preceded them; for when they tramped into the kitchen Randall was overwhelmed by an affectionate gingham avalanche that clung to his rugged neck and cooed, "Poor Daddy, he got himself partway into an awful gunfight, so he has to be petted a lot, now that he's safe."

Randall bear-hugged her off her feet; when he set her down, Red gave him a light shove and took his place. "Yeah, an' poor Red got himself all th' way into an awful gunfight, so he hasta be pet—

"Yip-e-e-e! She's callin' my hand, danged if she ain't!"

Aware for the first time that his girl had grown up, Randall shuffled his feet uncertainly then looked at Red. "Listen, Cowboy, does this mean wedding bells?"

"Yuh're damn tootin'," said Red, grinning happily.

Randall turned to Maysie. "How about you, Honey? You sure you're plumb willing?"

"Yuh're damn tootin'," said Maysie.

★

Book Reviews . . .

(THE REAL AMERICANS, by A. Hyatt Verrill. 309 pp. illustrated. $5.00 G. P. Putnam's Sons)

A. Hyatt Verrill, well-known to the readers of *Double-Action Western*, for his series of articles on the customs and background of the American Indian, recently has published what may be referred to as an encyclopedia on the Indians. "The Real Americans", by the admission of the author, is not intended to be a scientific work. Mr. Verrill, in the telling of the Indians' history, has made a contribution to the lore of that people which is not to be underestimated.

Mr. Verrill has no axe to grind, but paramount throughout the book is the feeling that in telling the story of deceit, hardship and treaty-breaking that was practiced by the white men, there is little doubt left as to whom the author feels is wrong.

Despite this, the book contains a wealth of material which has seldom been so thoroughly explored and analyzed. There are chapters on Religions and Beliefs; Dances and Ceremonials; Weapons, Moccasins, Headdresses, etc.; it is difficult to find so complete and thorough an exposition of the habits of the Indians elsewhere.

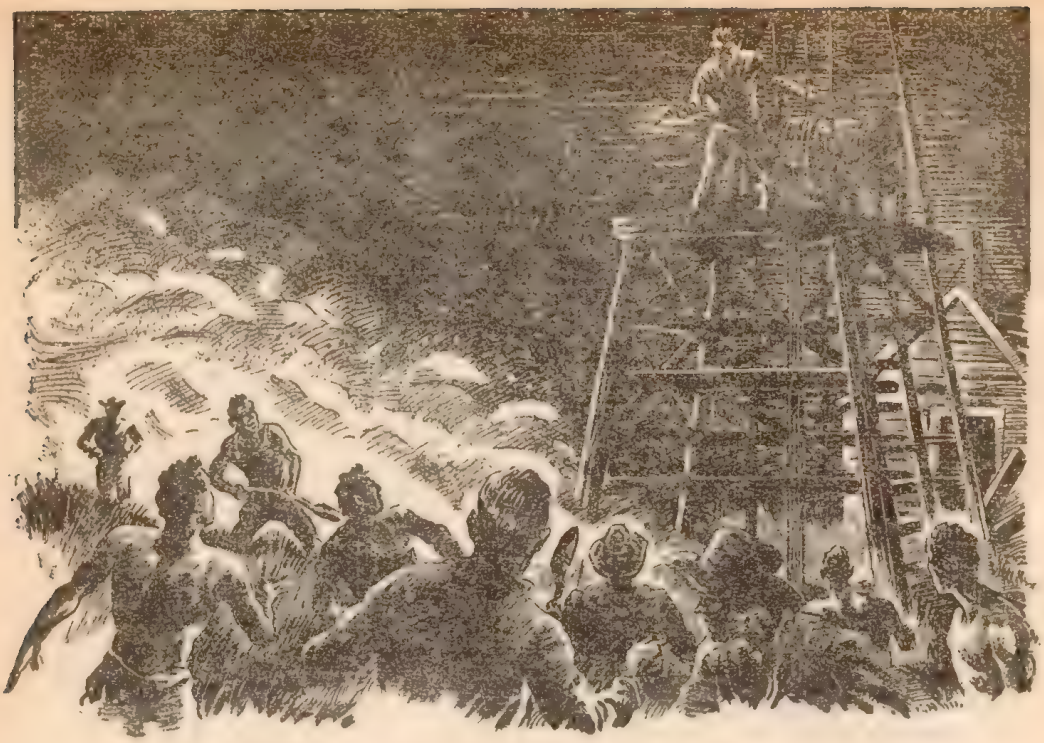
Of particular interest is the chapter devoted to Indian legends, starting with their fables and probing into the red man's explanation of Creation. This reviewer has yet to find another book which contains so much information, interestingly presented.

Among the many subjects covered in this volume is a complete glossary of the various tribes in the United States. Mr. Verrill attempts to trace their origins, and has devoted a special portion of this work to this end. Of further interest is a glossary containing brief biographies of many well-known Indians. This section alone is over fifty pages in length, and the reviewer feels that this—by itself—is more than worth the price of the entire volume.

Mr. Verrill has attempted to give a general outline of the life and times of the American Indian. In so doing, he has presented an indictment against the white man, who brought destruction and untold cruelty to the Indian. Indians are still known today as savages, but after finishing this book, the reader will find—possibly to his amazement—that like all other peoples, the Indian was an intelligent, creative, God-fearing man, capable of superb fighting in protection of his home and hearth, and given to the many faults to which all civilizations fall heir. The Indian is shown as the mistreated and deceived primitive whose lot it was to wither away so that the white man may be able to spread across the great vastness that is America. That he fought long and well in defense of his birthright is to be expected. Mr. Verrill does not ask for sympathy; he merely calls for understanding.

—*J. D. Simons*

★



Despite the fire, Tiefaver's mine was still valuable; but unless he could keep the stock from falling too far, he wouldn't have enough money to retimber. Gallaway and Jebhorn, however, had ideas of their own on how to upgrade the stock. First of all, they had to purchase some gold plows . . .

THE GOLD PLOWS

by A. A. Baker

THE MAN on the winch tower was smoke-streaked. His wet clothes were plastered to his body until the chest muscles rose against his shirt as he shouted. The men below stared up into the night-blue sky through seeping, rolling smoke that billowed up from the cage shaft.

"Don't try to seal off this mine!" He held a sixgun in a reddened fist and waved it like a baton. "They's men—live men—still in there!"

"An' dead..." boomed out an answer from the ground. "An' more'll be dead 'fore we're through searching those tunnels!" The speaker strode through the scene of disaster, pushing his sweaty way past the crowd before the cage tower and stared up at the man with the gun. "Hack Gallaway!" He raised his voice. "This is Marty Jebhorn, shift boss of The Gold Coin. You hear me?"

"Yeah, and I know about you," the answer came stubbornly. "You been in there more'n most but..."

"Then come down!"

"Come down, hell!" was the an-

swer. "Look over there, back of the boiler house. They's twenty-five bodies wrapped in blankets and more below, in the fire."

"And sendin' more men in after those dead ones'll just add to that number," Marty said.

"Talkin's no good. Nobody's gonna seal off this mine. I'll kill the first man comes near with a timber."

"Then get set to shoot!" snapped the Gold Coin shift boss. "I'm luggin' the first timber in."

Without waiting for a reply from the man on the tower, Marty forced his way through the open avenue of men and hoisting an eight-foot log, approached the door of the cage house. Gallaway's shot was fired over his head and the men in the crowd drew back, staring. It was one of those situations without an easy solution. The Bumming Bee Mine had been burning for two full days. Twenty-five bodies had been hoisted on ropes up through the smoke. Some of those dead were rescuers, killed by smoke and falling timbers deep on the six-hundred-foot level. The ground where the crowd stood was hot through the heavy soles of their shoes. The maze of drifts and tunnels below were a burning, smoldering holocaust, every puddle a boiling vat. Yet, there might be men still alive, sucking in that hot air, huddled against the face of a deep drift, waiting...

"The next slug'll be aimed!" Gallaway's shout was desperate; a man with his bluff called.

"Then aim her and shut up." Marty's feet strode heavily beneath the weight of the timber. His words came hollowly from the depth of his bent position. "Only chance to save this mine is to timber all the outlets and pour steam into every drift."

"What'd you say?" Gallaway shouted.

"I said, aim it and shut up!" yelled the man with the timber.

"Jebhorn's called your bluff." A heavy voice lifted and a blackened miner stepped from the packed crowd and hoisted the dragging end of Marty's timber. It rode lightly on their shoulders as the miners broke and silently attacked the stack of logs and hurried toward the tower.

Gallaway threw his gun far out, watched it fall, then his body slowly disappeared as he began descending the ladder. It was done. The Bumming Bee and its miles of guttering shafts were to be darkened by the heavy timbers. The bodies remaining below would be covered by the glinting rasp of hot, bellowy steam.

COLORADO was languishing under a hot sun. The bony mountains of rock plastered the spaced forests. Lakes yellowed as hot winds rippled the surfaces like miles of ripening wheat. The smoke of fires ate into the dried grass of flat stretches. Amid this vast solitude of mountains and plains, Union City buried its dead. The slapping rhythm of the coffin makers' hammers had passed with the dawn. The ore wagons were cleaned and the yellow grease leaked from the wheels as they crunched over the brittle, glass-like rock that filled the ruts to the graveyard. The shine from the harnesses of the sleek horses caught the sun like carbide lamps catch the streaks of gold in the blackened tunnels beneath the surface.

Marty Jebhorn, seated on the sloping seat of the first wagon, raised the reins and slapped them gently onto the rumps of the two-horse team. He turned and glanced once at the two coffins jouncing on the wagon bed, then raised his eyes and stared at the shaft house of the Bumming Bee. Escaping steam raised a few feet, mingled with air and disappeared. He clucked to the horses and sadly thought about the others, still buried in the levels, that would follow this funeral cortege.

Four miles back, the limits of Union

City ate into the lonely flat land. The warm breeze raised tufts of dust that crept under the doors and through the cracked windows of the buildings. Amos Tiefaver rose fussily from his leather chair and dusted the desk with a duster of stiff goose feathers. "Damn the stuff!" he muttered to the three other men seated silently in the hot room. Sheaves of ruled paper, containing reports of damage, moved gently under the swishing duster.

"Never mind the dust," the querulous voice of Harvey Harkness snapped. "We're here," he floated a hand around to the other men, "to formulate some plans about the company. San Francisco is ready to toss our stock overboard. I brought the general manager of the Sansome Bank, Mr. Jeekins, here..." he nodded at the black suited man whose tight shirt collar was raising red welts up his fat neck "...to sit in on our conference. Also his aide, Mr. Stockfield."

A short silence dropped as Amos Tiefaver surveyed Mr. Stockfield's black hat resting on the creased gray pants. The pants legs were held firmly to the polished boots by a cloth strap under their arch. His hip-length California coat flared over a low-hung colt and a bulge under the right arm pit told of a heavy shoulder holster.

"I've heard of Mr. Stockfield," Amos Tiefaver blunted his words. "I've heard he secures his investments with pistols. I'm surprised to meet him here." It was a statement requiring an answer.

"A Colt comes in mighty handy." Stockfield's voice was rough. The fine clothes did nothing to hide the man's racuous underthreat.

"Never mind Stockfield," Jeekins broke in. "You are a member of this group by invitation of the Sansome Bank."

"Such action by the exchange is to be expected," Amos Tiefaver acknowledged. "The fire, however, was not disastrous, gentlemen. Lives were lost, but that is the extent of our damage. The orebeds of the Bumming Bee..."

"Just a minute, sir," the president of the Sansome Bank interrupted. "It is reported, and we hope you can disprove it to our satsifaction, that the miners are banding against the mining company. Supposedly, because sufficient time was not permitted for rescue operations. It is our thought that, without miners, can your company continue operations in all three mines?"

"Not until the fire in the Bumming Bee is controlled," Amos Tiefaver said. "The tunnels to the Quicksand and the Gold Coin are used as connecting shafts into the Bumming Bee. However," he held up an impervious hand and continued, "the men are not unnecessarily disturbed about the future. Of course there are a few malcontents."

"A few?" The banker's aide squirmed on his chair. "As the stage halted in Union City, we were given explicit orders by a large group of men not to let the sun set on us in Union City! It was only by Stockfield's ready revolver that we were not mobbed."

"That was a group led by one Gallaway," explained Tiefaver. He paused reflectively. "Something puzzling about that man. Acts as though the fire was an opportunity for some purpose of his own."

"Let's pass that subject," Mr. Jeekins spoke. "Financing the reopening of a burned-out mine is delicate. The stockholders will expect assessments. Let one big stock holder begin selling," his voice became ominous, "and the rush that'll follow will start a panic. Can the Tiefaver Company rebuild without assessing the stockholders?"

A quiet settled in the room. Amos Tiefaver rose to his feet and snapped, "Is the Sansome Bank considering selling their stock on the open market?"

"Yes," Mr. Jeekins said tersely.

"Then get the hell out of my office!" yelled the mine owner. "What's your position, Harkness?"

"I'm going on the market myself,"

shouted the thin partner. "That's the only thing to do. Sell before the stock drops; before the extent of the damage to all three of the mines is generally known."

Amos slapped the duster head on the desk, and the men jumped at the sudden explosive temper of the old man. "I said, get out! Now, do so." He watched them leave and bellowed an afterthought until his voice carried well into the street. "Those men were right. Don't let the sun set on your yellow backs in Union City!"

THE FUNERAL over, Marty Jebhorn rapped his knuckles onto the door of the Tiefaver office. He listened, then turned the cool china knob and let the door ease open. He peered in and was met by the glaring eyes of the mine owner.

"What the hell do you want?" The belligerent question ripped across the hot room.

"Glad to hear you're feelin' fit," was the answer. "If you didn't growl, folks'd forget you were a grizzly bear dressed like a mining tycoon and think you was just a man with the look of a red-jawed grizzly."

"Well, Marty, you're in..." began the grumbling voice.

"Yep. Can you talk or is this the day you put aside for growlin'?"

"Oh, pshaw, set down and have a drink." Amos moved his coat aside and dug a brass key out of a vest pocket, then opened a lower drawer.

"I come to see about the widows." Marty waited until the drinks were poured for his answer.

"Figured you'd be wanting to know about that." Amos drained his glass.

"The usual?"

The old man nodded. "Twenty shares of stock apiece. It's worth maybe a hundred dollars a share. That should ..."

"It *was* worth a hundred dollars a share," growled the shift boss. "I hear the bankers were here?"

"That's right. They're dropping the stock on the market. After this fire, it'll mean bankruptcy."

"What'd they say about the new surface mine?" the words were startled.

"Never gave me a chance to tell 'em. Anyway, who ever heard of hydraulic mining in Colorado? California, yes; but not here. Water's too expensive." The old man began to shout. "That's not the trouble; the *real* trouble is Hack Gallaway. He met the stage and threatened those men. They walked in here scared to death. Damn it, the gold's there; retimbering the Bumming Bee, takes money but..." he broke off again and his eyes squinted. "Do you notice anything strange about Gallaway?"

"Nope," answered Marty. "Just got boiled over and made some threats at the mine. Everyone else realized the mine had to be sealed off."

"I think he's mixed up somehow with the whole stock deal," Amos said. "Raised hell at the mine, got the men behind him. It's been done before."

"There's one way to find out." The shift boss rose to his feet, his boots scraping the hard flooring as he moved to the door.

"Where you going?"

"I'm going down to the Big Shaft Saloon and *ask* Gallaway." He closed the door on the startled mine owner.

THE *Big Shaft Saloon* sat off by itself. It was a one-story building with a four-story false front that stuck up like a boarded-in water tower. The huge yard held a pole corral, and a wide porch circled three sides. The weeds lining the fence were brittle dry and the hard ground had been kicked into ankle deep dust by the feet of the thirsty. The black hacks of the funeral mourners lined the hitching rail and a buzz of loud talk rose from the open doorway. Marty Jebhorn edged through the men and silence followed his passing.

Hack Gallaway was still waving his

arms. The unbuttoned sleeves exposed the red hair on his heavy forearms. The red undershirt showed under his open shirt front. "It's only the miners who die in the flames!" His words spewed out like poetry from hell. "Ever hear of an owner or a banker killed by a cave-in or..." he paused as the room hushed and all eyes turned to Marty Jebhorn.

"Go ahead. Go ahead, Hack Gallaway. Get it off your chest. Think those that died in the Bee'll feel better for your raving?" Marty's voice was soft.

"Just the man I was waitin' to meet," growled Gallaway to the crowd. "Like a fly, he's been brought right to me." The speaker aimed a steady finger at Marty and suddenly the shift boss knew that Gallaway was dead drunk. So drunk, that a simple question would bring a boastful, but true, answer.

"Before the fly is torn apart," Marty's tone was light, "tell me one honest answer, Hack?"

The miner grinned and nodded. "Sure, Marty boy. Get it out, cause you won't be talkin' much onct I get to workin' on you."

"Who you working for?" Jebhorn asked, then enlarged on the question. "Are you working for Amos Tiefaver or those 'Fricso stock promoters?"

Gallaway's big face worked. The question was unexpected and disrupted his trend of thought. He moved his wide mouth in an effort to answer. "I'm just a miner, Marty. Just a miner what seen his friends die in the Bee. An' I seen you block off the shaft. You're going' to get that taken outa your hide, and right now!"

"You're too drunk to fight." Marty's voice was still soft.

"That's when I'm mean. When I'm drunk." Hack Gallaway stepped forward to prove it. His arm whizzed around like a club and caught the shift boss alongside the ear. The blow sent the squat man into the crowd and they drew back with derisive yells. Hack followed up and caught Marty around the head; he clinched his red hands together and squeezed. Marty's dusty hat popped off and let his sweaty hair fall to his ears. The big miner grunted as he applied pressure to the headlock. His weight bore down and Marty felt his spine swell and hot burning flashes raced up his neck bones. The whiskey-soured breath burned into his face and he felt his head become light. The crowd became a black whirl of distorted faces and Marty knew he was in real trouble.

He dropped prying hands from Hack's headlock and caught the big man by the belt. He lifted, and felt the pressure weaken and straining, knew Hack's toes were coming off the floor. As Hack's feet drew close together, vainly struggling for purchase against the boards, Marty suddenly stooped over and spread his own legs wide. He felt Hack's feet slip and slide. The big man tried to halt his fall by clinging to Marty's bending body. Marty set his teeth and rolled his face sideways; then, deliberately, he fell face forward, half praying that it would be Hack's head that would strike the floor first.

Marty Jebhorn felt raw whiskey burn his skinned lips. He opened his eyes and stared at a fuzzy hole in the ceiling. It wavered, then settled and he recognized it as a knot in the wood. He turned his eyes and his head ached with the effort. The buzz of talk halted and again he felt the whiskey glass against his raw mouth. Marty struggled up and swallowed the drink.

Hack Gallaway was stirring, his face half concealed by a sloppy wet bar towel.

"I'd call it a fair draw," a voice laughed out of the crowd. "Jebhorn and Gallaway, both out cold."

"Can you walk?" Marty asked.

Gallaway sat up and clawed the towel off his face. "Course I can walk. And I can go some more...if you've your mind set on finishin' the fight!"

The two men, arms bracing their seated forms, stared at each other's

bruised face. Suddenly a grin creased Hack's mouth. "I think we got us a bigger fight comin' up," Marty answered the grin. "Come along, we got to go and see Amos Tiefaver."

"What for?" Hack's tone was amused. "Think it'll take both of us to whip *him?*"

"Nope, but I think we'll both be fighting on his side," Marty said. "Have you got guts enough to listen, or are you one of those guys can't change his mind cause he let his tongue unravel his brains in front of people?"

"It's goin' to take more than that to change my mind. That mine fire—"

"All right, save it." Marty rose to his feet and hooked his elbow in Gallaway's and pulled. The big miner came to his feet groggily and both stood for a long second while their heads cleared. Then Marty led the way to Amos Tiefaver's office.

THE MINE owner stared across his littered desk for a long moment at the battered figures standing before him. Gallaway glared back as Marty began to talk.

"Well, I asked him, Amos, and he's not working for those stock paper miners."

"That's enough for me," shouted the old man. "But why'd he order them out of Union City?"

"I understand you did the same thing," Marty Jebhorn snorted.

"I did that," Amos nodded.

"Then asked Gallaway why he did."

"All right, why?" The question hung in the air.

"I don't like such type men," was the answer. "Ever hear of the Reese River Stock Company? They got every cent my old man owned and he was in on the discovery at Austin."

"That's the plan where they were going to float ore down a river that was only a few inches deep." Amos nodded his head. "Then there was the Old French Canal out in Nevada. They dug twenty-eight miles of canal and swallowed up a hundred thousand dollars. Stock deals always follow mining. It all goes back to the Mississippi deal." Amos Tiefaver's face had smoothed out and he nodded toward two empty chairs. "Sit down, both of you."

The old man spread his hand wide on the desk and waited till they were seated. "I'll let you two in on it first; the Tiefaver Mining Company will soon be out of business." He turned tired eyes to Gallaway. "I know you might think 'what the hell do I care?' but..."

"Just a minute," Marty interrupted. "That surface mine is rich enough to pull you out of the hole. The fire only destroyed the lower levels of the Bumming Bee. The Gold Coin and the Quicksand are..."

"Both steady producers," finished Amos. "But with the stock being peddled by the Sansome Bank, it'll start panic selling. It'll put us out of business. I can't raise money to reopen the Bee."

"Anybody know how rich the surface mine is?" Marty's voice was thoughtful. The owner shook his head. "Then sell stock in a new mine; call it Two Mile Diggings. Two miles of surface ore," Marty Jebhorn's words hurried on. "Sell only to stockholders in the other three mines. Make it so that to buy into the new development, you got to hold Stock in the Bumming Bee and the Quicksand and Gold Coin. That'll stop the stock owners from selling."

A fighting light glittered under the heavy brows of Amos Tiefaver. "That'd do it but," he spread his hands in a familiar gesture of defeat, "we can't work it without water. Mining men would know that and expose the deal."

"Well, all right!" shouted Marty. "Those other deep mines are producers. If you can hold them until the Bee is retimbered, stop the sale of your stock on a panic market. The stock'd hold..."

"I don't know why I'm sittin' here," snapped Hack Gallaway. "What the hell does it matter who owns the mines?"

"Listen, you loud-mouthed-ape," Marty gritted the words out, "every widow of the dead in the Bee is holding one hundred shares of stock. If that stock goes down, what've they got? The memory of a husband in a grave."

"You mean they got Tiefaver stock?" Hack's voice was suddenly soft.

"Yeah, they got stock! Amos settled it on them right after the fire, and it's up to us to make it pay off. You in?" His brown eyes burned like agates under the sun. Hack Gallaway nodded.

"And you in?" Marty turned to Amos Tiefaver. The old man straightened his shoulders and nodded. "But we can't do anything way out here; San Francisco is the place. We'll build up the new surface mine. Build it into a bonanza and sell only to the present stockholders. Ninety days'll give us time to retimber the Bee. Then we can go before the stockholders again and explain the reason for our promises and trust in their judgement to excuse the fraud. It's a tremendous gamble but... When does that next stage leave?"

THE NIGHT stage was crowded. Harkness, Jeekins and Stockfield were standing in a restless group, watching the hostler back in the three teams and fasten the trace chains. The narrow door belled open and the body of the stage dipped as Harkness climbed aboard. He stared out through the small window as the three men approached.

Amos Tiefaver had a heavy rawhide bag and the gold edges of stock certificates could be seen bulging from the strap-tied receptacle. Gallaway mounted onto the top and dangled his long legs over the rear canvas boot. Marty Jebhorn, uncomfortable in a stiff black coat, ushered Amos Tiefaver into the stage, then clambered swiftly in and staddled the strong box that was bolted to the floor. With Harkness and Stockfield on board, the small interior was crowded.

The driver yelped at his horses, chucked a handful of gravel at the leaders, and the creaking leather springs jostled. The San Francisco stage was started on its long journey. Union City's lights flared briefly, the tinkle of a piano drifted from a red-fronted saloon, then Union City receded behind the racing stage.

"Goes right by the new surface mine," Marty made the first comment after a half hour's ride. "Another mile or so and..." His words were interrupted by a shout from the road. The squeal of the footbrake against the iron rim of the wheels cut into the stage; the gravel on the rutty road banged against the undercarriage as the coach slewed and halted.

"Stay in your seats!" The order snapped out of the darkness.

The driver called down to them from his high seat. "Better do like he says; they's about five of them I can make out."

But Amos Tiefaver had already bolted. His heavy grip clutched under his arm, he had opened the far door and jumped down. Without a backward look, he began to race across the rocky ground toward a nest of rocks that loomed black against the moon.

"That's him!" The shout came from a tall horseman. The running horse swished by the stage. Marty Jebhorn was halfway out when the first shot was fired. He saw the light from the sixgun flare out its single explosion, and Amos Tiefaver fell. His heavy body rolled once, the suitcase broke open, and the stock certificates scattered. A breeze caught their edges and they drifted around his body. Gallaway had his gun out and coolly took aim at the turning horseman. He fired once, and the man leaned out of the saddle,

then caught his balance. He waved an arm and roared; "It's done! Let's get out!"

Gallaway fired at the fleeing horsemen while Marty raced toward Amos. The old man held a bloody hand tight against his right side. His breath whistled from wet lips and sweat stood out on his pain wracked face.

"They never...meant for me...to reach Frisco." He stared up into the circle of passenger's faces. "Get me... back to Union City." He closed his eyes and lay back on the ground.

The stage driver whirled the stage and the old man was hoisted aboard. At a sedate pace, the silent group of men were taken back. Amos was unloaded and carried into his large house by Marty and Gallaway. Then once again, they heard the retreating stage start its hard-driving run toward the distant Sierras.

FIVE DAYS later, Marty and Gallaway rode dusty horses up San Francisco's Market Street. "Fair travelin' time," Gallaway remarked. "There's the Sansome bank building." He pointed with a thumb as they passed a one-story granite building.

"Like a toad in a pond, sitting right next to the stock market," Marty told him. "We haven't much time. The stage'll be trottin' into town and Jeekins'll start dumping the Tiefaver mining stock. You get out and find a foundry large enough to make a plow, or a dozen plows, bigger'n any plow that's ever been built."

"Sure, Marty. And that's the longest sentence you've said since we left Union City. You been quiet as an owl in a sack. What're the plows for?"

"Tell you later," Marty Jebhorn jerked out the words. "Then when you've ordered the plows, get over to the stock yards and start buyin' every bull ox they got in town. Put in orders for hundreds of oxen and, if anybody asks, just say one thing..."

"What's that?" laughed Gallaway. "Tell 'em I just jumped loose from a booby hatch?"

Marty smiled somberly, his eyes still raking the stock exchange. "Just tell them you're buyin' gold plows and the animals needed to plow with."

Gallaway stared, then looked resigned "That I'll do, partner. Anything else?"

"Yeah." A grin lightened Marty's broad face. "Give them a down payment." He searched through an inside pocket of his corduroy coat and extracted a thin sheaf of banknotes. "Promise to pay on delivery and sign the order blanks, *Mr. Gallaway, representative of Amos Tiefaver Mining Company.* Scatter the money out as much as possible; that's all the cash we got. Amos promised to send more, but he'll have trouble getting around for awhile." He handed over the money and turned his horse. "I'll be registered in at the Palace. Meet me there."

Jeekins, Stockfield, and Harvey Harkness hurried through the marble walled Sansome bank foyer. Their heels rapped crossing the marble then melted into the thickly-carpeted board room.

Mr. Jeekins stuck his head through a hall door and snapped. "Travers, come in here and bring the Tiefaver Mining Stock." He dropped into a chair at the head of a long polished table and tipped a silver water carafe. The cool water had hardly stopped gurgling into the glass when Travers appeared. A red manila envelope was tucked under his thin arm. With a pleased smile, he passed the folder to the bank manager.

"Enjoy your trip, gentlemen?" His face reddened under the frozen stare of the three men. Nervously, he continued into the silence. "Glad to hear of the success of your trip..."

"What're you blabbering about, Travers?" Jeekins was busy untieing the thin string.

"We all thought, sir, that the fire at Union City would depress the stock," Travers said

"Yes?" It was a cold word from Harkness.

"But the stock in the Tiefaver holdings has taken a tremendous surge, sir. Speculators are buying like mad. A Mister Jebhorn is handling the deal and being *very* clever. Selling only to present stockholders in the Tiefaver Enterprises. Buyers are fighting for the old stock so they may be allowed to purchase the stock in the surface workings." Travers paused, stiffening under the stony stares of the men. "I took the liberty, gentlemen."

Jeekins let words erupt. "You mean, you purchased for the bank additional stock in the Tiefaver holdings?"

"I did not," a leer crossed the thin face. "I purchased a sizeable block in my own name. I was waiting for your orders before buying for the bank. It's the greatest strike of the century. I have confidential information that Tiefaver's men—Jebhorn and a Mr. Gallaway—have ordered a dozen gold plows and have cornered every oxen in central California!"

"Gold plows?" The words sounded like a curse on Harkness' mouth. "Just what is a gold plow?"

"Why...I don't know, sir; never thought to ask."

"That'll be all, Mr. Travers!" The three men sat for a few seconds after Travers left.

"Are those new surface diggings worth anything, Harkness?" It was a loud question from Stockfield.

"Valuable, yes," nodded Harkness, "with water to hydraulic it out. Ore block of several miles. Ten to fifteen dollar a ton ore, but the cost of bringing in water is prohibitive."

"If Amos Tiefaver hadn't been shot..." began Jeekins.

"That was *your* idea. 'Prevent him from getting to San Francisco at any cost,' you said. Well, this Jebhorn has outdone us. Turned the market upside down." Harkness' voice was vehement.

"We can still save the situation," Stockfield interrupted. His voice was suave and the other men seemed to shrink, as though each knew what Stockfield was going to suggest. "Remove Jebhorn."

Jeekins finally spoke. "Can it be done safely?"

"Safely and permanently," the thin-lipped gunman answered softly.

MARTY JEBHORN walked across the carriage drive of the Palace Hotel and stepped out into the cold wind of Market Street. The few guttering lamps, shaped like glass torches, lighted the soft swirl of fog. The flat cobble stones were slippery under his feet as he turned up toward the noisy *Bella Union*.

Gallaway was waiting in the huge gambling room. He had a handful of coins and was busily cranking a red-fronted gambling machine. As he turned and made his way through the crowd, he saw Stockfield step away from the bar and move toward Jebhorn. The tall man's hand was flat against Marty's side. Gallaway hurried forward, but was suddenly surrounded by a jostling party of toughs in a festive mood. They crowded him against the bar and Gallaway knew it was all planned. He struck out heavily at a lumpish face and grinned as the jawbone cracked. The men sprang in and Gallaway felt the dull thud of a leather sandbag; he held to the bar and with dazed eyes, saw the second blow of the blackjack start. He dropped to the floor. His hand clawed the sawdust then, with a shout, scooped the gritty sawdust in both hands. He raised and flung it straight in his attacker's face and bolted for the door.

The street was deserted. Gallaway's detainment had lasted but a few minutes, but it had given Stockfield time to walk Marty around into a barrel-littered alley. The flat gun in Stockfield's hand still pressed into Marty's waist. "Keep moving, Jebhorn. Down to the end where it's darker."

"Why?"

"You wise guys always got to ask questions?" muttered Stockfield.

Marty knew that Stockfield was ready to pull the trigger, and began to turn on one heel, ready to duck.

The shout from the alley's entrance sounded like the bark of a hungry dog. Both men turned quickly. It was Gallaway, and he was turning into the alley on a dead run. Marty attacked. He smashed a heavy fist at the gunman's jaw. The gun exploded and the slug ripped through Marty's shirt and sang against the the tin-covered wall. Stockfield reared back to trigger the second barrel and Marty dropped a shoulder, caught the thin body at the belt and slammed the man against the building. Gallaway arrived and smashed his full weight into the struggling men. He rolled to his feet and yanked Marty off the mucky pavement, then turned back and banged Stockfield's face into the muck with a slashing kick from his heavy miner's boot.

"Over the wall!" Gallaway rasped. "The others'll follow."

THE SUN WAS well up and streamed into the board room from the green shaded windows. Travers opened the heavy oak door and edged his way into the room. "Mr. Jebhorn is calling. Shall I ask him in?" His eyes rested first on Harkness and then on Jeekins. Harkness shrugged and Jeekins nodded.

Marty Jebhorn strode into the room. His tight coat and string tie were snug. One pants cuff rode on a boot top. His black hat sat on the back of his straight hair and a vagrant loop dangled over his temple.

"I see you got back from Union City," Marty said. "I was hoping the grizzlies would eat you somewheres along the road. But I guess even grizzlies are touchy about some of their food."

"Just hold on, Jebhorn!" Jeekins rose to his feet angrily.

"Sit back down." Marty's words bristled like a man wound up for a fist fight. "I'm here just to tell you a few things. First off, I know you sent those bushwhackers out to stop Amos from reachin' Frisco. Figured you had to get here before the old man, cause he might be able to find some friends with money to pull the deal out of the fire." The two men didn't meet his eyes.

"Well, maybe you know that Amos' stock is ridin' high. He'll have the money now to reopen the Bumming Bee. Those widows'll be able to live on the stock he gave them. You..." he paused in disgust and Harkness spat words into the pause.

"You've committed a fraud, Jebhorn. The buyers of Tiefaver stock, in the surface workings, will be on your neck. Gold plows!" He mouthed the worlds like a man with a bar of soap in his mouth. "Gold plows may start a buying spree, but once the stock is bought, dividends have to come through—"

"Shucks," Marty smiled. "We just *called* them gold plows. You see that surface mine goes maybe ten dollars a ton of silver and gold," he raised his eyes blandly, "but that ground runs heavy with *copper*. Now, copper ore is easy to work. Run a surface drift, drive your wagons below your chutes, and haul it into a smelter. We don't need water, and the gold and silver can be recovered as a by-product. The stock certificates read, 'Mineral Mine.' Copper's a mineral.

"I wish," Marty continued as he turned from the avid faces, "there was some way to punish you for the shootin' of Amos Tiefaver, but we'll keep tryin'. Maybe one of those bushwhackers'll be caught some day. Colorado still likes to hang a man now and again. Come on out and we'll keep a few ropes worked nice and soft for you three."

DIG HIM NO GRAVE

by Tod Harding

It looked as if Blackie Quinn might not hang, after all. But, if he were guilty, would he escape justice?

IF VIGILANTE law had still been ruling Clay Corners when Blackie Quinn was brought in by the posse, the prisoner would have been hanged on the spot without more ado. But things were different now that Judge Wentzler had taken over law and order.

Rock Dolan had just come out of the mercantile as the posse drew up before Wentzler's front porch, where the judge was seated in his rocker, and Sheriff Atkins called a halt; having roped and tied the outlaw himself, after a stiff tussle, the lawman was quite pleased with himself. "We got the murderin' polecat, Judge," Atkins said. "Better have your condemnation suit pressed."

There were wry chuckles from members of the posse, and Rock knew that everything was sewed up in advance. As town defense counsel, he'd be part of the show; he'd be able to challenge a juror here and there, and cross-examine witnesses, and make a final plea to the jury. Then Wentzler would charge the men to go out, take their time in deliberation, and bring back a verdict of "guilty" before the saloons closed, by grab.

"Had my clothes pressed today," the judge rumbled. "I figured you'd bring him back. Tell Caxton to get a grave ready up on boothill; we'll try him tomorrow and hang him Thursday."

Dolan started to make his way through the little knot of onlookers who had already formed about the posse; they gave way when they saw the cripple-handed man was coming. He caught Quinn's eye for a second and a brief look passed between them, but no words. The words would come later, and he wondered if any words could possibly blunt the sharp determination he saw all around him. A crime had been committed, and it was enough that this man looked guilty. Perhaps it was a sign of progress that they considered a trial at all, under the circumstances; killing a girl wasn't considered excusable here.

The judge's voice cut through Dolan's thoughts, as he called out, "Rock Dolan! Better start thinking of a nice-sounding last plea to the jury. We're going to do this thing proper, no matter how guilty he is; no man will be able to say that even Blackie Quinn didn't hang without a fair trial."

"Huh!" snorted a posseman. "Waste of time, your Honor."

Wentzler leaned forward and pointed his finger. "It's for *your* sake, Lem Hallett, and for the sake of the rest of you, and for the good name of Clay Corners that we're doing it this way. String a man up on the spot, no matter how guilty he looks, and later on someone says maybe you made a mistake—and what answer have you got?" He slapped his hand against the side of the chair, and it sounded like a pistol shot. "No, by grab; I don't want any citizen of Clay Corners ever to be caught without an answer in a case like that. When you can say honest and square, 'This man was found guilty by a jury of his peers,' then you've proved that your town is run by law and not mob rule."

And the damnedest thing about all that, thought Dolan, clenching his useless hands, was that Wentzler's theory

Atkins roped and tied the outlaw.

was absolutely right. The only hitch was *how* a jury decided that a man was guilty...

ATKINS grasped the reins of his gelding, and was just about to give the order to move on to the jail, when a shriek from across the street made every man-jack freeze in his tracks.

"That's Lil!" gasped the man next to Dolan. "What's she doing out here now?"

No one answered; they all just stood there like statues as the tall, black-haired woman came across the street, her hair streaming wildly behind her. At first, you thought this was someone's tomboy daughter; but as she approached everyone could see that she was a woman grown. At first, you thought she had a nice figure, but then you noticed a rigid, gaunt quality about her; she walked like a prophetess, her eyes flaming but her face immobile as stone.

Judge Wentzler alone seemed to be able to shake off the spell. He got up out of his chair and came to the head of

the steps. "Lillian Peters," he called out. "Lillian Peters, this is no place for you, and no time for you to be out. Go home, Lillian; you father is looking for you."

The woman came to a halt, and for an instant, the harshness of her features softened. "Pa sent me," Lil said in a sepulchral voice which seemed to penetrate right into the bones of the listeners. "Pa told me to tell you."

Even His Honor was taken aback by this. Lil had never used this tack before. When he spoke, the judge's voice was gentler. "What is the message, my child?"

Lil wheeled and pointed a bony finger at the somewhat-mussed, but still handsome figure of the prisoner. *"Dig him no grave,"* she wailed. *"He shall not lie in the earth."*

Blackie Quinn started, and the half-impassive, half-amused expression which had been on his face all through the business gave way to bewilderment. "What do you mean?" he asked, but Lil Peters had already turned around, and was walking back in the direction from which she'd come.

Rock Dolan muttered, half to himself, "If that doesn't sound like some kind of prophecy: . . ."

Sheriff Atkins coughed and spat. "No use asking her, Quinn. She's loco; been that way since her Pa was killed. Sometimes she thinks she's a little girl, and has to be fed and washed and dressed—and sometimes she seems almost grown up, like now. But she still thinks old Harvey is there in the house with her. She's been like this for nine years now, and I reckon she was about nineteen when it happened."

"Yeah," added Lem Hallett; "she's going back now. Peters' housekeeper has been taking care of her. . . I wonder if she could have second sight. They say some folks whose minds have gone like hers can see into the future at times. . ."

Wentzler's voice brought them back to the situation at hand, and the momentary amiability toward the prisoner vanished. "Never heard of second sight saving a murderer yet," he said, "unless maybe he had a vision before he committed the crime and then didn't do it." He indicated Rock Dolan, who was still looking the other way, the way Lillian Peters had gone. "Want to talk with your attorney now? Hey, Rock; wake up!"

Dolan turned around and glanced at Blackie Quinn again. The prisoner smiled faintly, but said nothing. "I'll be down in a little while, Sheriff," he said.

"Rock ain't as useless as he looks" the judge added. "Why, I never in my life heard such a touching final plea as the one he made for Snake Eyes Justin, on trial for rustling. I had to allow that such extenuating circumstances might justify a life sentence; too bad the jury couldn't see its way clear to recommending mercy."

Quinn's eyebrows went up. "It's good to know a man's going to come up before a judge who has *some* human feelings," he observed.

Wentzler waved his hand. "You'll find this court impervious to flattery. Take the accused away, Sheriff, and make sure that he's in proper order for execu—fair and impartial trial."

WHEN SHERIFF ATKINS let him into the prisoner's cell, then closed the door and left the pair alone, Rock Dolan saw that Blackie Quinn hadn't changed much. He didn't look like a man who was well-nigh certain to stretch rope the day after next; he sat on the bunk with a sort of lopsided grin on his face, his black hair tumbling down his forehead. "Can we talk private?" he asked.

Dolan nodded. "Atkins won't listen in." It was as clear a sign that the sheriff considered Quinn as good as buried as you could ask for. Nothing would stop Wentzler's wheel of justice from turning its course, unless. . . .

Rock sighed. "Well, Blackie, it looks

as if you're in a real tight spot, this time."

Quinn winked and stretched. "Did you hear what that gal said? 'Dig him no grave. He shall not lie in the earth.' Now there's a prophecy if you go for prophecies. Me, I don't know about second sight, or anything like that, but I've got a sneaking suspicion that she was right. You and me's just got to figure out how we swing it, that's all."

Clay Corners' special counsel for the defense frowned. He looked at the young outlaw carefully for a moment, then said, "Let's not get previous. I owe you my life; I'd be dead and long buried if you hadn't pulled me out of that burning hotel three years ago. No matter what you've done, I'll try to save yours, now; but if you're guilty, I can't even try to do anything more than that."

The outlaw shook his head as he looked at the reddened ruins of Dolan's hands. "Don't know that I did you a favor, Rock. You were a first class cowhand, and good with a gun, too. You could write letters for a fellow that sounded like poetry, almost. Now you're a cripple, almost worse than if you was laid up in bed."

Dolan sighed. "It was hard, but I did a lot of thinking when I was in the hospital. I figured that maybe the Almighty had some use for me, since I was still alive. So I thought about what I *could* do. I learned to eat again, and dress myself, and things like that; then I studied law, and learned how to talk convincing-like.

"They gave me a chance, Blackie; they helped me make good. Judge Wentzler's pretty rough when it comes to capital offenses, but he's fair otherwise. And vigilante law has gone now."

"Do you think I'm guilty, Rock?" the other asked.

Dolan rubbed the stubble on his chin and stared at the wall. "You always were a wild one, Blackie. We both know that you've been danged free with other people's property. But...well, I'd never have said you were bad, really."

Blackie scrutinized his fingernails, the grin still on his face. "Why, sure; I've accepted money now and then from gents, and perhaps I had a gun in my hand when they felt a streak of generosity. But there's a difference between lifting a man's roll and killing him. Do you think I'm a killer, Rock?"

Dolan shook his head. "Not in my book."

"Thanks, oldtimer. I was hoping you'd say that." He ran his fingers through his hair. "Don't know how you can prove it, but I didn't kill that gal and her father. Never laid eyes on either one of them."

"Two days ago," Dolan said softly, "Cy Grennell's dog came limping into town, hurt pretty bad. The sheriff and his deputy took care of the animal as best they could, then lit out for Gren-

nell's place in the hills. When they got there, they found the bodies of old Cy and his pretty daughter. Grennell had been clubbed to death in a fight, and the place was wrecked. He had had some money cached away there, and that was gone. The girl had a bruise on her head, and she'd been shot; apparently she'd been knocked out when the fight started, then came to in time to go at the killer again. She didn't get any damage in; the killer just shoved a gun against her side and pulled the trigger."

Blackie frowned. "What happened to the dog."

"Cy's kinfolk took him. He'll be all right." Rock Dolan's voice dropped low. "That dog, Blackie, was the only witness; he knows who the killer was; he knows who hurt him and killed his people. I'm going over the Wentzler's tonight and get a subpeona for the dog."

Quinn nodded. "That ought to do it. Yeah, that'll fix the case against me in no time at all. I guess if we can't bring proof positive, they'll hang me no matter what you say in court."

Rock walked over to the barred window and looked out into the still night. "It's a long time since you and I were kids, isn't it, Blackie. ...Remember how we used to play pirates in the caves?"

"Yeah, those were the days. We had a lot of fun."

Dolan nodded. "Then you went away while I stayed on in town. We never thought much about each other. I guess, until that night the hotel burned down in Birstow and we were both staying there. You didn't know I was in the next room, did you?"

The handsome Blackie shook his head. "Just knew somebody was in there, that was all. Figured there was a chance if I moved fast."

"And now the wheel's made another turn, and here I'm trying to save you from a rope necktie. Well...there's chance—just a chance. It all hinges on that dog..."

THERE WAS a crowd around the jailhouse next morning when Rock Dolan came up, and something told him that things weren't as they should be. Sheriff Atkins, his hat clamped on to his head, stepped out of the office just as Rock came up to the edges of the gathering.

The lawman saw him before anyone else did. "Dolan!" he yelled. "I was just coming after you; there's some questions for you to answer and your answers had better be good. What do you know about Blackie Quinn's breaking jail last night?"

The attorney's heart sank, as all eyes turned in his direction. "Broke out?" he asked. "Quinn got away?"

"Yeah." Atkins' thumbs curled around his gunbelt. "Maybe you know how it happened. Maybe you sort of helped it along."

Rock caught sight of Tom Grennell, and noticed the police dog he held on a leash. "Tom," he said, "is Cy's dog well enough to travel?"

Grennell nodded, and Rock turned to the sheriff. "I'm not going to waste any time making excuses. This dog here—Lucky, Cy called him, and I guess he lives up to his name—was going to be Quinn's defense witness. It looks like he's the law's best witness instead."

"And what can Lucky do—tell us where Quinn went? Has he sniffed Quinn's scent?"

"If he hasn't, then he's still the defense's best witness. Sheriff, give me just two minutes—less, maybe. Tom, you bring the dog into the cell Quinn was in last night. My guess now is that Lucky will tell us quite a lot."

Atkins stood in thought for a second, then nodded. "All right, Rock; a few minutes more in taking the trail won't be wasted, if there's a chance of getting something to follow. This Blackie Quinn is smart; he knows the country as well as we do."

Rock led the way, and Tom Grennell followed, with Lucky trotting behind. That was how it started; once inside, the dog's hackles began to rise, and before they had half covered the distance through the corridor to the row of cells, Lucky had taken off and was leading the trio. He came up to the empty cell the outlaw had occupied, then leaped for the bars, snarling, tearing at them with his claws.

"That proves it!" said Grennell. "Blackie Quinn was the skunk who killed Cy and Polly, and near-killed Lucky, too."

Lucky was sniffing around, now that he saw the cell was empty. He started off down the corridor again.

Atkins said, "That was the way Quinn left—through the back. He foxed Yost in some way, conked him, grabbed his keys. Left by the back. Tom...keep that four-footed deputy of yours in hand while we saddle up."

Rock Dolan said, "Lend me a horse; Sheriff; I'm coming, too."

Atkins looked at the attorney. "Hell, Rock, you couldn't do anything on a posse." His voice softened. "It ain't your fault he got away, and you'd have proved him guilty as sin if he hadn't."

"I'm coming," Dolan repeated. "I've got a debt to pay. I can still ride a horse, and if Lucky takes us in the direction I suspect he might, I think I know where we'll find Blackie Quinn."

ATKINS called a halt, and the posse climbed down from their mounts. The brush extended but a few more yards now; beyond it was rocks and a canyon; to the left was the stream they had just crossed. Lucky ran on ahead for a little way, head to the ground, stopping every now and then to whine in almost-human frustration.

"No use, fellow," Grennell called out to him. He wiped his brow. "That son has been too smart for us. We know he traveled upstream to kill his scent, but the rocks come right down to the edge of it in a dozen places, and there's no telling where he may have come out. Maybe he's in the canyon; maybe he backtracked, and is now off in another direction. Looks like we've lost him."

Atkins nodded. "Well, Dolan was right so far as we've come. Now the trail's just run into the ground; even a bloodhound couldn't pick up the scent here, and none of us are Injuns enough to trail over bare rock." He looked at Dolan. "Ain't got any more ideas, have you?"

Rock smiled sadly, and nodded. "Yes, I think I have. He's done just about what I thought he would do. I know this canyon, Sheriff, and so does Blackie. We used to play around here a lot when we were buttons." He sighed and his shoulders slumped. "We used to play outlaw and posse; I'd be the sheriff trailing Blackie. We found a lot of hiding places that you'd never dream could be found around here... And last night, for some reason, I had an urge to talk to Blackie about playing pirates; there's a particular cave we used for that..."

"Caves? Oh...sure. There's caves over to the north there, not half a mile away."

"Not the one I mean. This one's hidden."

"Well, lead us there, Rock."

Dolan shook his head. "No, Atkins, this is a job for one man alone. I think I can get to Blackie; he's safe where he is, and he could wipe the rest of you out, one at a time, if you tried to get into that cave from the front."

"Think he wouldn't shoot you just

as fast, Rock?" asked Grennell. "Hell, a man can only hang once, no matter how many he kills."

Dolan shrugged and took off his boots slowly. "Maybe, maybe so. Anyway, I've got a debt to pay. If I don't come back, then you can try it your way." He took off his hat and laid it on the ground. "This will just be in my way, too." He turned and walked into the stream.

"Wait!" called out Atkins. "You ain't even got a gun."

Dolan held up his hands. "Wouldn't do me any good if I had."

HANDS THAT couldn't grip a gun, or even a pen firmly, which could barely hold eating utensils without shaking, could still be used to swim. Rock Dolan waded around a bend in the stream, beyond where the posse waited, and saw the familiar canyon on either side of him. How many years had it been since he'd come this way? Still, he knew the landmarks would still be there; these heaps of stone would keep their shapes while generations of men were born, grew to maturity, then finally withered and returned to the earth.

The water grew deeper as the stream widened, forming a fairly large pool up ahead. Here was his goal—a flat-faced stone rising out of the water's edge, with a crack in the shape of an "L" near the top, far above his head. He plunged in, now, and swam to the side of the rock, remembering all the motions he'd gone through here in the past. Then, taking a deep breath, Rock dived.

Beneath the surface, little could be seen, but even his ruined hands could feel out the channel he sought; he entered it, swimming under the great rock. It wasn't as easy as it had been, last time; his heart was pounding, his lungs seemed about ready to burst.

There was a roaring in his ears as he groped for the bank ahead of him. He started to rise to the surface, and something touched his back; he wasn't through the channel yet.

Then, he felt mud against his outstretched fingers, and knew that he'd made it. Wearily, gasping for breath, he pulled himself out of the water. It was dark and the air wasn't very fresh, but he knew he could breathe it; as the moments went by, his eyes became accustomed to the darkness, and he began to see faint shapes around him—an upward slope. He struggled to his feet, stood up unsteadily and, leaning against the passage wall, started forward.

The passage turned and twisted several times, giving way to side tunnels—this area, he knew was honeycombed with caves—but Dolan knew better than to turn away from his course; there were many pits here. Several turns and twists later, he saw a faint glow in the distance, and nodded.

Yes, Blackie was here; he'd built a fire. There was no danger of the smoke issuing out above ground to betray its presence; there were natural chimney-passages all along here, and if a tendril reached the open air, it would be far from any watching eyes.

He came up to the small fire and saw that no one was beside it; he sighed and stretched his hands before it, waiting. A little beyond this, he remembered, was a precipice.

Rock didn't wait long. A low voice said, "So, you remembered—and trailed me."

There was no need to turn around. Rock said, "Yes, I followed you, Blackie. You should have known I would."

Blackie Quinn came forward now, looking just about the same as he had before, except that there was a sixgun in his hand, trained on Dolan.

Rock said, "You don't need that iron, Blackie. Even if I was armed, there's nothing I could do about it."

Blackie smiled. "Sure, but I'm not taking any chances. No more chances at all. Did you come alone, Rock?"

Dolan started to lie, then shook his head.

"I'm glad you said that, Rock. Because, you see, I know there's a posse with you. Sounds carry a long ways around these parts; you can't hear anything from inside here out there, but a lot of things come in. I heard horses, and a dog, I think."

Dolan nodded. "I guess you didn't want to face Lucky, did you?"

"I guess not. Funny, I was almost ready to take my chances on a trial, until you told me about that. Looks like I'll have to hunt down that mutt; he knows, too."

Rock shook his head. "Everyone knows, now."

"But they don't know where I am; they don't know how you got here, or how I can get out. Would you promise not to tell them, Rock?"

Dolan shook his head.

There was a puzzled look on Quinn's face. "Why did you come, then? You weren't leading them in here— I'd know if there were more than one man swimming under that rock; I was down there listening. Why did you come here, when you knew I'd have to kill you?"

Rock Dolan looked into the fire. "It's a funny thing, Quinn. By all rights, I should be dead—should have died in that burning hotel. But you pulled me out, and I guess that it was the Almighty's will, or fate, or whatever you feel like calling it.

"I owed you my life, so I had to do something to square that. I came here to give it back to you, and wipe out the debt; if that's the way it's written, that's the way it will be. . . .And maybe I wanted to find out if you could kill me; maybe I wondered if you were really the kind who'd kill when they didn't have to. You could knock me out, or tie me up just tight enough so that you'd be a good distance away before I could get loose—and even I wouldn't know where to look for you then. I wanted to find out."

Quinn said, "I never got a kick out of killing, if that's what you mean. It was always either me or the other guy."

"Like Polly Grennell?"

A strange look crossed Blackie Quinn's face. "I lost my head, Rock. I swear, I never meant to kill her, or the old man, either—didn't realize I had until it was too late. . . .I'm sorry about that—always will be. And I'll be sorry about killing you, too."

He shook his head, and his finger tightened around the trigger. "But I guess you can call that fate, too; I've got a feeling that I won't be safe as long as you're alive, now—that somehow you'll find me and bring my end to me. . . .Just like you were always the sheriff who got his man when we used to play at being outlaws.

"Got any last words, any message I might be able to send to someone?"

Rock wasn't looking at Quinn now;

he was looking behind him, and the outlaw must have read the expression on Dolan's face. He turned slightly, and saw what the cripple had seen.

The shape that was approaching Quinn was wet and glistening, and the firelight caught the dog's fangs as it leaped. Blackie squeezed off a shot, but the bullet barely singed Lucky's fur; Quinn threw up his arm and staggered backwards as the dog's body collided with him.

Rock watched, fascinated, and a little horrified. Quinn had dropped his gun, and the man and dog were rolling over the floor of the cave, beyond the fire, toward the precipice.

For a moment, Rock Dolan forgot everything except the danger facing his oldtime friend. "Blackie," he yelled. "Look out; roll back . . . back!"

Quinn heard him, tried to stop in his course, but the ground was slippery here. A choked gasp was all that came from his throat before he and his attacker disappeared over the edge. There was an instant of silence, then a wailing cry, then silence again.

Rock Dolan threw himself flat and crawled to the edge of the precipice, peered over its lip. He could see nothing, but he knew that there were jagged rocks and another pool of stagnant water below. There would be no return for either Quinn or Lucky.

"No grave for you, Blackie," he whispered. "No, no one need ever dig you a grave; you'll not lie in the earth."

★

SOMETHING NEW!!

I'M INTRODUCING A BRAND NEW MAGAZINE CALLED ARCHIE'S MECHANICS THAT'S JAM-PACKED WITH EXCITING IDEAS. IT TELLS YOU HOW TO MAKE IT! HOW TO FIX IT! HOW TO MAKE MONEY! AND WHAT'S NEW IN SCIENCE AND MECHANICS!
.....AND IT'S GOT THINGS IN IT THAT APPEAL TO ALL US GALS AS WELL AS BOYS! IT'S A FASCINATING MAGAZINE FOR ALL US TEEN-AGERS!
ARCHIE'S MECHANICS MAGAZINE IS ON SALE RIGHT NOW! ONLY 15¢! YOU'LL READ THIS MAGAZINE FROM COVER TO COVER! THEN YOU'LL READ IT AGAIN!
SNIP!

If Your Dealer Is Sold Out Send 15c To

ARCHIE MECHANICS

241 Church St. New York, 13, N.Y.

LAWMAN'S DOUBLE-DEAL

by Zachary Strong

The only way Steele could uphold the law was to conspire against it, and help a killer escape!

IN THE wake of night-swallowed hoofbeats came the creak of leather from the corner of the house; then the shadow of a man separated itself from the blacker ones of the gloom. Now that the visitor had gone, Steele made no effort at secrecy.

His heels punched solidly through the dirt of the yard and up on the porch. The door was open, and the rectangular tunnel of yellow light boxed in his figure, glittering on the star pinned to his vest. He was tall, and heavy around the chest and shoulders, though not a young man. A sagging brown vest was over his open-necked shirt, and low-slung cartridge-belts clung to his hips, their empty loops looking like missing teeth.

Then he went in and waited for the man across the room to discover him.

Benton jerked about and started towards the table with the strongbox in his hands...and then he saw the lawman. His briskness evaporated with the flat look of fear that took possession of his eyes.

"Some men knock before walkin' in, Sheriff," he suggested with thick sarcasm. His pale amber eyes, almost the color of a tortoise shell comb, were busy, studying every line of Steele's face.

The lawman met the heat of his gaze. "It all depends," he returned. "I never yet heard of a man knockin' before going into a rattler's cave. There's no use sparring around, Benton. I've been outside listenin' to every word young Carse said to you, and I heard your mouthings, too."

His words struck Benton like a set of knuckles. He clenched his fists into hard, red burls, and caught his breath. An ugly tension flared up.

Steele's attitude was one of profound contempt, from the down-pull of his lips to the thumbs carelessly hooked over his belt. But overlying the contempt was a corrosive hatred that whitened the flatness of his cheekbones and kindled dark fires in his eyes. He watched the thick, flabby form of the banker start to go slack.

"I know you for a foreclosin' fool from my own experience," he bit out. "I've heard other men say you'd steal the pennies off your dead mother's eyes, and I believe it. But I didn't figure you for one to blackmail a pair of helpless kids like Jeremy Carse and his wife!" And his gaze was heavily on the thin sheaf of bills atop the table.

"This is a damn poor attempt at revenge!" the banker shot at him. "You'd cut out your right eye to get even with me for doing what I had every right to do. As for Carse's money—well, he owed me a couple of hundred. He just paid it off."

Steele's laugh was a short, harsh sound. "Only it wasn't the kind of a debt you hooked me on, was it? No; this was a debt he owed you for keepin' still about him. I ran across a dodger bearin' his likeness yesterday. That

dodger spilled everything about Jeremy bein' sold into apprenticeship when he was a kid, and him an' Lucy running away to get married six months ago. The rest of the story I guessed, when I saw you collar him on the street and watched him go away shakin'."

Benton shook his head emphatically. "It's news to me," he gave back. "Whatever is behind Carse is none of my business. I'm concerned only with what he owed me."

"And you're damn lucky you didn't get it—or you'd have receipted a gut full of slugs tonight. Well, enjoy yourself while you may, Mister. I'm goin' back now and see what I can stir up that stinks."

He hitched his belts up and moved towards the door, glad to end the interview. No case-hardened killer ever aroused the disgust in him that Benton's kind did, using high positions to enrich themselves at the expense of weaker men. He himself had fallen under the banker's greed, when he saw the savings of fifteen years of chasing crime in Dorado wiped out on a call loan.

He had known Dorado was watching him to see how he would take it, for the town had come to look on him as a criterion in matters of ethics—gun-ethics or otherwise. They accepted the quiet, good-natured man as a standard of what a lawman should be, and perhaps it was only that fact that made him able to act the same the morning after he was ruined. It had not been easy knowing the livery stable into which he had sunk everything, including the hopes of a happy old age, was gone.

But he wondered if the town would think what he was going to do now was his way of getting even with Benton. He hoped not, though he couldn't deny the pleasant feeling it gave him to dwell on what was about to take place.

Then he was whirling as Benton snarled, "Wait a minute!"

The command was ragged with menace. The banker came swiftly around the table. "What are you going to do?" His tawny eyes blazed, bright with hatred and fear.

"I'm going to show those kids the easiest way out," growled Steele. "There's no percentage in trying to dodge the law for three more years, until the apprenticeship business plays out. I'm going to send them back, where Jeremy can finish his time. Then mebbe they can pick up their lives and see if a few patches in the raggedest places won't fix them up pretty well."

Benton nodded, "Sound reasoning, Sheriff. But what about the trouble you mentioned—is that it?"

"Not much. The stink comes when I swear out a warrant for blackmailing!"

On the heels of shocked silence, the sibilance of Benton's rasping breaths came into the room. The yellow pouches beneath his eyes seemed to sag. Then a blaze of anger rushed into his face. "Like hell you will!" he charged. "You ain't setting foot out that door with an idea like that battin' around in your head. Don't let your badge give you notions bigger'n you are!"

Steele studied him. He read hatred that approached madness in the distended nostrils, the loose lips. He knew killers, and though he had never pegged Benton for more than a bluff, he saw blood-lust in the clawing fingers. Weaker rats than Benton had risked everything when they felt the wall against their back. And in that moment Steele knew Benton meant to kill him....

He stood frozen, shocked by the sudden transformation in his man, knowing as Benton knew, that only his own death could save the banker from prison. He thought of Jeremy and Lucy, of the misery ahead of them if he died with his secret.

"Don't try it!" he warned sharply. "I don't scare easy. You've plumb backed the deuce once too often. Now there's a bet to be paid." He turned to go, but his eyes lingered on the soft, red fingers lying close against Benton's lapel.

No louder warning than the slipping of metal on a button brought him spinning about. His gaze flashed a danger signal to his mind. Benton had dragged a double-barreled Derringer from his shoulder hideout.

"Drop it!" he roared, his hands leaping towards his cedar-handled forty-fives as he shouted. His motions were without the nervous, cat-like speed of many gunmen. He moved with a purposeful drive of energy that automatically passed over unnecessary movements in his advance toward the final split-second when firing pins would drop—and one of those excess moves would pile one man into the dirt.

He held his fire as long as he could. Then, as the twin-barrels lined out at him, he dropped the hammer. In the same instant a spiteful whine of lead winged past him. The two explosions came close together, dimming the lamp with the concussion.

"Damn you, Steele!" Benton roared. He stared down at the bloody hole in his hand. The gun dropped, but he caught it with his left hand and raised it to empty the other chamber at the lawman.

Steele's shoulders dropped a little. The gun in his right hand bucked and belched a hatful of smoke as he fired. The slug caved Benton in. He swayed back on his heels, while a glassy, appalled look came over his features. Then his knees buckled, spilling him to the floor.

Steele's guns found leather again. His gaze rested on the prostrate figure. "Crazy, damn fool!" he muttered. "Just enough of a rat to fight like one when he got cornered. How in the devil did he expect to explain it if he did gun me down!"

His head started a scornful wag—and stopped, as a tocsin of danger rang loud in his mind. A chilling realization of what had happened tugged the last trace of color from his countenance. He had stuck his own head in a noose by shooting Benton!

Dorado town knew the hatred he bore the banker. They had watched him stalk the streets these last few months and betray no evidence of smouldering revenge; but they had told each other—and he had overheard them—that the day was on the way when he would blow the lid off.

Then hope lifted him as he thought of young Carse and his bride.

They would be eager to tell what they knew about the blackmailing, bearing out his story. But what would other men say? He could hear their whispers:

"Funny how Steele just happened to be out there that night—almost like he was waiting for it, warn't it? First time Benton slipped, he was there to nab him. Resistin' arrest, he called it, didn't he? Well, I got another name for it!"

With a start, Steele pulled himself together. What a picture this would make for a wandering saddle-tramp to walk in on—him standing there with smoking guns in his holsters; Benton lying on the floor; the open strongbox on the table! Cold sweat glistened on his brow, and the muscles ribbing his chest became taut.

And all of a sudden he knew he wasn't going to stay here and perhaps pay for the death of Benton with his own life. Disgrace would be the best he could hope for.

Mentally he shuffled all the facts. No one had seen him come. The shots would hardly have been heard by anyone, either. "Bueno!" he muttered. He could coyote around to the office by

the Rabbit Pass road and be there when the crime was reported!

The thought was comforting, so much so that the blood came rushing back into his chilled limbs and he swung hurriedly out the door. It was not fear that sent Steele racing back into the darkness, but the galling thought of paying for a worthless life with his own useful one.

HE HAD not been in his office two hours when excited voices and the thump of many boots carried down the street to him. He thought to himself, *"Here it comes!"* and steadied his jumping nerves.

Then they came in—a dozen men who hauled an unkempt stranger in their midst. Steele was on his feet, puzzled by the stranger's presence. Then his gaze jumped to Slim Peters' freckled face as the long cowman started talking and gesturing.

"Shot old man Benton!" he gasped. "Me an' Starr rode out there about eight to talk with him about a loan. What'd we find but this jasper loadin' up with his watch and money—had his strong-box open, even—and there on the floor lies Benton!"

A queer roaring filled the sheriff's head. His tongue clove to the roof of his mouth. Starr, another cattleman, saved him momentarily. .

"Ain't it lucky we got the drop on him, though!" he swore. "Look at the jigger—close!"

Steele batted his eyes against the glare of the lamp and studied the prisoner's bearded face. Actually, he was almost completely unable to think, for his mind refused to recover from the shock of those first words: *"He shot old man Benton!"* But his gaze recorded the narrow blue eyes set deeply above a hard jaw and thin cheeks bearded with a quarter inch of black whiskers. He let his eyes travel on down the narrow shoulders and slim hips, clothed in dirty plaid shirt and levis. The man's lips were back in a snarl. He seemed little more than a kid, certainly not over twenty-two.

Abruptly, like water filling a basin, memory flooded Steele's brain. "Hook Clancy!" he breathed.

One of the men held up the prisoner's right hand, exposing a stiff index finger that was bent into a perpetual hook, as though it were against the trigger of a forty-five. "That's proof enough!" he said. "A two-time murderer now. Shot a feller in Santa Fe six months ago, and tonight he counted coup on Benton. What're we waiting for, Sheriff? Got an empty cell?"

Steele nodded dumbly. He was trying to get this all straight in his mind, for he felt as though he were dreaming, and that if he moved the dream might be shattered. This much he knew: Hook Clancy was wanted for murder, a brutal killing of a storekeeper in a holdup. Since that murder he had been on a reign of terror in the sparsely populated sections of New Mexico, robbing Mexicans and isolated ranchers.

He thought, with a tightness about his throat, what hair-trigger action fate sometimes indulges in. If he had stayed longer, or come later, it would have been him they caught there, instead of Clancy! But Clancy had stumbled in on the body and plundered it... and because of that he was here with two crimes on his head.

Absently he got his keys from the hook on the wall and led them away. He heard the outlaw snarling, now, protesting his innocence. Not until the cell door closed on Clancy and the others finally left, did Steele get a chance to think.

He sat alone in his office, his unseeing eyes resting on the worn desktop with its spur-marks, on the gaudy calendar on the wall, on the sheaf of dodgers and papers under the silver horseshoe-paperweight. He liked it here, and he wanted to stay here. But

he couldn't, if he were known as the killer of Benton.

It came to him gradually, like a wedge being tapped with minute blows into his consciousness, the resolution to keep quiet, to let Hook Clancy hang for his crime.

He squirmed under the suffocating weight of his conscience. *A sheriff letting an innocent man hang for the crime he committed himself! It sounds pretty, doesn't it, Steele?* His mind shouted at him, and he protested:

"But Clancy will hang, anyway! Whether or not he hangs for Benton's death, he's got to go back to Santa Fe to pay for the other killing.

Is that the kind of thing you were thinking when you laid your hand on the Bible and took your oath of office? Wasn't there something about justice being done—no matter whether the criminal happened to have influence or not? Now you're conspiring to defeat the law you swore to uphold!

And again Steele clenched his fists and fought. "I swore to uphold justice—that's what I'm doing. I killed Benton in self-defense. If I'd murdered him, I'd confess. Will that rope hurt Clancy any more because it stands for two murders, instead of one?"

There was no answer to that. Steele knew he had won—against himself. He blew out the tiny flame in the lamp and went back to get some sleep.

JUSTICE went on greased tracks. In three days Hook Clancy stood before the bar and shouldered a sentence of death. He was returned to his cell to wait a week before dying.

During that week he probably suffered no more than did Sheriff Steele. He could feel the familiar gazes of his friends stripping the pretense from him as he walked down the streets. His good-natured face lost color and took on lines of heavy worry that bracketed his mouth and pinched his eyes.

And on the eve of the hanging, when the pounding of hammers on the scaffold outside in the yard had smashed his nerves away like brittle threads of glass, Steele suddenly saw that there was a middle course open to him. So sudden was the thought that he jumped up and stood staring vacantly at the wall. Then he swung around the desk and hurried to Hook Clancy's cell.

Clancy looked up from the bunk as the cell door banged back against the wall. His face was tired and creased, but he had been shaved, and looked younger than ever.

"I want a talk with you, Clancy," Steele began. He thought to himself that there was little of the Cainbrand on this man, despite the reputation he carried. His blue eyes looked more scared than shrewd, his face callow, rather than hard.

"If it's preachin'," Clancy breathed, "it's too late. They're hanging me tomorrow, you know." And his lips twisted into a semblance of a grin.

"I came here to confess," the big, grave lawman said.

Clancy's gaze sharpened under the black bar of his brows. He studied him.

"I've known all along you didn't kill him," Steele went on, determined to get to the point. "I was there an hour before you stumbled in and plundered Benton, and it was my guns that burned him down." Then, without heat, he told Clancy everything—not omitting the plan to let him die for his own crime.

When he had finished, Hook Clancy extended a hand and gripped the sheriff's. "Good for you," he said. I figgered you'd scratch too deep to go through with it."

Now it was Steele's turn to be startled. "Go through with it!" he gaped. "How did you—"

"I saw you kill him," Clancy said simply, smiling a little.

The strength left Steele's legs. He felt them shaking. Had he been this

close to letting a criminal call him "yellow"?

Hook Clancy repeated, "I saw you kill him when I walked by the window. Well, there's no use lying about why I was there. I wanted money. Where I made my mistake was in sticking around too long. I rustled some grub out of the kitchen, and before I could get out—"

"My gawd," Steele gasped. "You mean you were going to die without speaking? Why—"

Clancy's thin shoulders went up in a shrug. "Why not? I saw it all, and knew it wasn't your fault." He looked out the window, and the light fell over his young features so that it washed off the hard lines of bitterness about them. "Folks have got to have something to look up to. In these little cowtowns, often as not the thing they respect most is a badge. It'd be a shame to see it tarnished, specially in a case like this."

Steele knew a slow warmth stealing into his breast. "There's more than one brave, clean man's face gracin' a dodger," he said, wagging his head. Then he brought himself back hurriedly.

"I came here to offer you a way out," he said quickly. "A way that'll save both our hides. If you were to die tomorrow you'd have cancelled your own crime and mine. Well, if you can die and still go on livin', it wouldn't be so bad, would it?"

"Would you mind cuttin' the deck a little deeper?" Clancy frowned.

"Here it is then. When you get your dinner tonight, there'll be a file somewheres in it. Spend the night cuttin' the bars. In the morning I'll have a hoss ready and you can take it and cut for Mexico. I'll give the alarm after givin' you a half-mile's head-start. Ride straight to the Rio. When you get to the bank, stop and act like you were looking for a good way down.

"That's when you 'die.' I'll stop the posse and crack a rifle cap at you. It won't come closer'n fifty feet, but you'll pitch from the saddle and roll in the river. Swim with the current to Willow Springs, and crawl out. You can make it before we get there if you don't stop to float on your back. There'll be another hoss for you at the Springs."

Hook Clancy reached for his hand. "Lord!" he jerked. "If you'd do that!"

"There's just one thing," Steele cautioned. "I want your solemn word of honor that you'll never pull another job as long as you live. And I want you to cut out for South America, where you won't be known. Other-wise you'll have your own crime to pay for. Now, will you do that—promise not even to carry a gun again?"

Clancy bit his lip. "You tell it scary," he admitted. "But what the hell! Frijoles an' enchiladas the rest o' my life is better than brimstone an' hemp. Sure, Sheriff, it's a deal. We're pards from here on out!"

Steele stopped with his hand on the door. "Not pards," he charged. "But at least we understand each other. I'm hopin' this is the first case on record of two wrongs makin' a right. It's up to you, Clancy! Get out of here quick, and don't let no ambitious lawman catch up to you this side of Guatemala!"

Clancy was grinning. "Don't worry none about me. Where I'm goin', the dead ride fast!"

THROUGH the night a thin, rasping sliver of sound broke intermittently into the nocturnal noises around the jail. One by one, the bars of Clancy's cell were removed and laid aside.

And when the sun tilted redly over the broken edge of the Organ Range, a thin form slid through the window of the adobe building and sped down the alley. Shortly, there was the flurry of hoofs departing from Dorado in great haste.

It was no more than two minutes later when Sheriff Steele rushed from the jail and fired a single shot. Curious

heads bristled in windows and doors.

"It's Clancy!" Steele cursed. "Somebody slipped the son a file. He's cut for the river!"

A posse of men with shirts only half buttoned and levis hastily dived into, was whipped together. A half mile behind Hook Clancy they took the trail.

A few futile shots raised dust a hundred yards from the fugitive; then the posse got down to the grim business of trying to overtake him before he could cross the river. Down through the draw they thundered following easily by his dust-trail. When they had raced from the rocky defile into the flat table-land which dropped abruptly into the Rio Grande they saw Hook Clancy frantically spurring up and down at the edge of the steep bank, hunting a way down.

Steele's hand flung up in a signal to stop. "This chase is endin' right here!" he announced.

He slid from the kak, and his rifle butt found his shoulder. Then he was feeling the kick of the thirty-thirty, keening the motionless figure on the river bank through tallied sights.

The cry that tore itself from Clancy's lips was borne to them on the light river breeze. The force of the slug seemed to knock him from the saddle. He scrambled up and staggered towards the bank. Then a second shot crashed. Clancy appeared to have been literally knocked over the brink by the soft-nosed slug.

Pent-up breath was exhaled. Steele leaped into the saddle again without a word. He led the way to where Clancy's horse stood munching salt-grass. The ten riders drew rein along the river and scanned the surface for any sign of their man.

There was none. The muddy, swift river kept its secret.

Steele's jaw was hard. "They'll haul him out down around Socorro one o' these days," he prophesied. "I reckon we can wait."

Then they rode back, nine men who were at peace, and one whose conscience still wore cruel spurs...

STEELE had six months of bitter self-recriminations.

His heart shuttled between hatred of himself and quiet satisfaction, depending upon whether the memory of deception was stronger or the knowledge that he saved young Carse and Lucy.

He remembered with a smile the young outlaw's promise to break straight away for the south. "The dead ride fast!" he had said. This particular dead man had better, he thought, or he'd be dead and under the ground before he knew it.

Sometimes the cold fear rose up to devil him that Clancy might go back on his promise to him and take up his guns again. If he ever did—if he should kill some innocent man as they said he had once before—the sweat came out all over the lawman when he thought of that. That would make him a murderer for fair.

Stiffly he ground that idea down. Clancy wasn't as bad as they said. He was young and hungry, and maybe a little wild. Not too old, at least, to make up for his mistakes by living decently the rest of his life. And because he wanted to believe that, he did.

In December word drifted in that an unknown young long-rider had robbed a bank up Cedar Valley way. No one had recognized him behind his mask, but Steele found himself trembling with a fear deeper than any he had ever known as he heard the story recounted.

He shook the assailing doubts off. "Don't be a fool," he told himself. "Clancy's in Mexico or Guatemala by now. Besides— he promised to go straight." But all the time he was battling against his fears, he was waiting —waiting for fate to catch up with him.

And it caught up with him—just two weeks later. The thunderheads of disaster decided to unload, and left him

stranded in an ocean of his own making. An unknown gunman held up the El Paso stage, but when he sprang to his horse, the mask fell from his face revealing the features of Hook Clancy.

Once more dodgers were out for the outlaw, who had so lately been listed as "dead." But he was right part-way in his promise to Steele; he kept moving so fast no one ever got within rifle-shot of him.

Small consolation that was to the lawman. He was on edge from dawn to dark, dreading more trouble, trying to persuade himself that Hook Clancy hadn't let him down. Maybe they had made a mistake in identification. How could the man who'd been going to the scaffold with sealed lips, to die for another's crime, reverse his character so quickly?

But there were more things after that which convinced Steele against his will. Clancy went like a prairie fire, never resting, it seemed. He was a Billy the Kid all over again. On his swift paint he rode from one battle right into another. Flushed with the wildness of youth gone wrong, he took risks an older man would have flinched before, and by his very foolhardiness came out alive.

One day the mail brought a new dodger for the sheriff, bearing the picture of Hook Clancy, and with all his crimes brought up to date. Steele was astounded at the appearance of the outlaw. It was hard to believe this was the man he had pictured in his reflections, and yet he remembered every line of the weasel-like face vividly.

The eyes were slate-colored, and pinched in towards the nose more than he had remembered. The mouth was a cruel down-curve beneath the hooked beak of a nose. It came to him with a start that he had been thinking of Clancy as looking the way he wanted him to, rather than as he did; Steele

[*Turn To Page* 84]

The Newest and Best in Pocket-Size Mystery

featuring a thrilling novel of lurking fear

HOOK UP MURDER

by Richard Deming

plus two outstanding novelets

PLAY-AND-SLAY GIRL

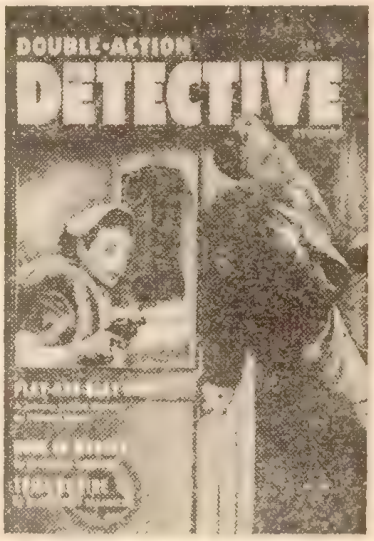
A new Johnny Liddell Story

by Frank Kane

TRIAL BY FIRE

by Margaret Manners

These, and others, are in



If your newsdealer is sold out, send 35¢ in stamps or coin to Columbia Publications, Inc., 241 Church St., New York 13, New York.

DOUBLE ACTION DETECTIVE Stories

New Reducing "Miracle"

"DROPEX" REDUCING COCKTAIL

Proved by Doctors to Reduce Weight
9 lbs. in 4 weeks...15 lbs. in 2 months!
No drugs . . . No pills . . . No diets

Clinical Tests Prove
"DROPEX" Reducing Cocktail
Drops Fat Away

If you want to lose 9 to 15 pounds, here's the easiest way to do it. Don't go on a special diet—just add a dropperful of the new "DROPEX" Reducing Cocktail to your favorite drink before each meal to lose 2 lbs. each week.

"DROPEX" Reducing Cocktail has been proven by doctors who tested it on a group of normal overweight men and women. The doctors' tests showed a safe steady reduction of weight every week with "DROPEX" Reducing Cocktail. In 4 weeks the average person lost 9 lbs. In 2 months 15¾ lbs. of fat were lost. Every one lost weight with "DROPEX".

If you want to lose 9 to 15 lbs., get "DROPEX" Reducing Cocktail today.

We Guarantee your money back if "DROPEX" does not reduce your weight without any special diets.

Absolutely Harmless!

MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

If you want to lose 9 to 15 lbs. We guarantee your money back if "DROPEX" does not reduce your weight WITHOUT ANY SPECIAL DIETS!

"DROPEX" is new and different . . . pleasant, tangy taste.

"DROPEX" is pleasant. Add it to your favorite drink or plain water

Entirely different from anything you have ever tried! Stop crying the overweight blues. Start today on the new safe simple "DROPEX" way to lose pounds of ugly fat. Simply add "DROPEX" as directed to fruit or vegetable juice, soft drinks, alcoholic beverages or plain water. The new "DROPEX" is easy, simple, an effective way to lose weight.

ENTIRELY DIFFERENT FROM ANYTHING YOU HAVE EVER TRIED!
Add "DROPEX" to fruit or vegetable juice, soft drinks, alcoholic beverages or plain water.
In clinical tests on both men and women, EVERY overweight person reduced with
"DROPEX" Reducing Cocktail 2.98
Copyright 1958, Ditco, Inc.

In Doctor-Checked Tests
"DROPEX" REDUCED EVERY OVERWEIGHT PERSON!
—Without Dieting, Without Exercises

"DROPEX" Reducing Cocktail was carefully tested on a group of overweight men and women. The results from taking "DROPEX" delighted the doctors supervising the tests, as well as the overweight men and women. Many of the people who took "DROPEX" had used other products without success, but every one lost weight with "DROPEX". The average weight loss was 2 pounds a week over an eight week period.

All the overweight persons did was to add a dropperful of "DROPEX" to their favorite drink before each meal. No diets or special eating plans were used. The doctors gave sole credit for the easy steady loss of excess weight to the use of "DROPEX".

"DROPEX" Reducing Cocktail is sold on an iron-clad guarantee. You must be pleased, or you get your money back. You have nothing to lose but fat —so easily, so safely, so pleasantly.

CHARM CO. DEPT. DA-5,
400 MADISON AVE. NEW YORK 17, N.Y.
Please send me ____ bottles of DROPEX REDUCING COCKTAIL at $2.98.

- ☐ Send C.O.D. I will pay postman plus postal charges.
- ☐ I enclose payment. You pay postage.
- ☐ Send 3 bottles for $6.00 (1 free when you buy 2)

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ Zone _____ State _____

STOP SMOKING

SAFE---EASY WAY

If you want to stop smoking then you owe it to yourself to try the new improved formula of TOBACCO CURBERS medicated chewing gum to help you chew away the tobacco habit. They are not a drug, not habit forming, pleasant tasting, safe and harmless. We are so sure that TOBACCO CURBERS will do for you what it has done for thousands of others that we make this ABSOLUTE GUARANTEE: TOBACCO CURBERS must help you cut down on your smoking, help you resist the desire for smoking, help you break the smoking habit within one week or we will refund to you the complete purchase price. ACT NOW. You have nothing to lose but the smoking habit. Send $1.00 for your supply of TOBACCO CURBERS (heavy smokers send $2.00 for economy supply). On C.O.D. orders postal charges extra.

1.00

TOBACCO CURBERS, Dept. DA-1
2 Allen St. New York 2, N. Y.

Unsurpassed Comfort With Improved

RUPTURE ★ RELIEVER

NO FITTING REQUIRED
ADJUSTABLE FOR YOUR COMFORT

FOR MEN, WOMEN and CHILDREN

AT LAST A NEW FORM-FITTING WASHABLE BRACER WITH ADJUSTABLE LEG-STRAPS THAT'S GUARANTEED TO BE THE MOST COMFORTABLE YOU EVER WORE! NO SNAPS, NO LACES, NO STEEL. Amazing new kind of flat groin pad for support with complete comfort. BEST TOO AS AFTER OPERATION SUPPORT. Order by MAIL. ☐ RIGHT SIDE $3.95. ☐ LEFT SIDE $3.95. ☐ DOUBLE $4.95. Measurement around LOWEST PART OF ABDOMEN IN INCHES IS: ____ inches. SENT ON APPROVAL. AVOID SERIOUS DELAY • • SOLD ON MONEY BACK GUARANTEE.

WRIGHT BRACER CO.
Dept. 113, 318 Market St., Newark, New Jersey

SCIENCE-FICTION BOOK CLASSICS:

1. "Martian Martyrs" (Coleridge)
2. "Valley of Pretenders" (Clive)
3. "The Machine that Thought" (Callahan)
4. "The New Life" (Coleridge)
5. "The Voice Commands" (Clive)
6. "Rhythm Rides the Rocket" (Olsen)
7. "Fantasy Book No. 1"
8. "Strange Tales"
9. "Horror Parade"
10. "The Garden of Fear"

SPECIAL DEAL: Complete Set of these TEN BOOKS for only $2
Limited Quantity Order Now:
WEHMAN BROS. Dep't GD-5
712 Broadway New York 3, N. Y.

had believed more good about him than bad.

After they brought news, not long after that, that the killer had shot and seriously wounded a Wells Fargo guard, the sheriff knew that whatever good lurked in the man's heart, it was buried beneath a heap of bad. That same day, Steele made his decision.

HOOK CLANCY had committed all his depredations within a radius of twenty or thirty miles from Mesilla. In all that territory there was only one place a man could hide—in the brasada, the tall tangle of brush along the international border west of the Rio.

So one morning Steele saddled up early and headed for the brush country. It was a long shot, but nowhere else had they found him.

There was no thrill of adventure lifting him erect in the saddle as he plunged into the nearly impenetrable thicket, as there had been on other manhunts in the past. It is not easy to take the blood trail against one who has saved a man's life. The weather was cold and wet, and added to the misery of his thoughts.

Across the swartness of the lawdogs face had come a bleakness foreign to him short months ago. He would not have believed that one single act of deception, however justifiable its motive, could have dragged him over such a hell of coals as his slip had.

For two days he beat through the brasada. His clothes were wet through, and his face and hands scratched with a dozen criss-crosses left by the hungry fingers of the brush. A hardness had settled in his visage.

It was bitterly cold and he thought, glancing back into the gray stretches behind him, that it would be snowing high in the Jicarillas. It was so frigid a man would be aching with cold, if he weren't on the move constantly. On the heels of that simple thought raced an idea.

[*Turn To Page* 86]

CAR BURNING OIL?

Engineer's Discovery Stops it Quick

Without A Cent For Mechanical Repairs!

If your car is using too much oil—if it is sluggish, hard to start, slow on pickup, lacks pep and power—you are paying good money for oil that's burning up in your engine instead of providing lubrication. Why? Because your engine is leaking. Friction has worn a gap between pistons and cylinder wall. Oil is pumping up into the combustion chamber, fouling your motor with carbon. Gas is exploding down through this gap, going to waste.

SAVE $50 TO $150 REPAIR BILL

Before you spend $50.00 to $150.00 for an engine overhaul, read how you can fix that leaky engine yourself, in just a few minutes, without buying a single new part, without even taking your engine down. It's almost as easy as squeezing toothpaste or shaving cream out of a tube, thanks to the discovery of a new miracle substance called Power Seal. This revolutionary, new compound combines the *lubricating* qualities of Moly, the "greasy" wonder metal, with the leak-sealing properties of Vermiculite, the mineral product whose particles *expand* under heat. (Up to 30 times original size.)

Just squeeze Power-Seal out of the tube into your motor's cylinders through the spark plug openings. It will spread over pistons, piston rings and cylinder walls as your engine runs and it will PLATE every surface with a smooth, shiny, metallic film *that won't come off!* No amount of pressure can scrape it off. No amount of heat can break it down. It fills the cracks, scratches and scorings caused by engine wear. It closes the gap between worn piston rings and cylinders with an automatic self-expanding seal that stops oil pumping, stops gas blow-by and restores compression. No more piston slapping; no more engine knocks. You get more power, speed, mileage.

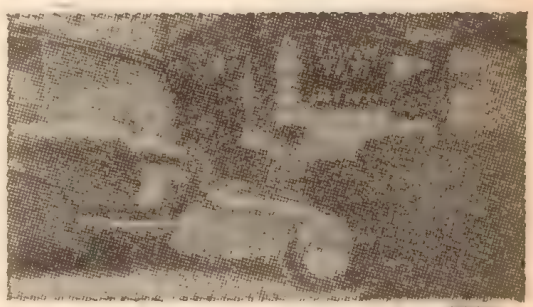
This genuine plating is self-lubricating too for Moly, the greasy metal lubricant, reduces friction as nothing else can! It is the only lubricant indestructible enough to be used in U. S. atomic energy plants and jet engines. It never drains down, never leaves your engine dry. Even after your car has been standing for weeks, even in coldest weather, you can start it in a flash, because the lubrication is in the metal itself. That's why you'll need amazingly little oil; you'll get hundreds, even thousands of more miles per quart.

TRY IT FREE!

You don't risk a penny. Prove to yourself that Power-Seal will make your car run like new. Put it in your engine on 30 days' Free Trial. If you are not getting better performance out of your car than you thought possible—if you have not stopped oil burning and have not increased gas mileage—return the empty tube and get your money back in full.

Power-Seal is absolutely harmless; it cannot hurt the finest car in any way. It can only preserve and protect your motor.

RUDSON AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRIES
Dept. DA-5, 400 Madison Ave.
New York 17, N. Y.



POWER SEAL MAKES WORN OUT TAXI ENGINE RUN LIKE NEW

Here are the Test Engineer's notarized figures showing the sensational increase in compression obtained in a 1950 De Soto taxi that had run for 93,086 miles. Just one POWER SEAL injection increased pep and power, reduced gas consumption, cut oil burning nearly 50%.

	Cyl. 1	Cyl. 2	Cyl. 3	Cyl. 4	Cyl. 5	Cyl. 6
BEFORE	90 lbs.	90 lbs.	105 lbs.	90 lbs.	80 lbs.	100 lbs.
AFTER	115 lbs.	115 lbs.	117 lbs.	115 lbs.	115 lbs.	115 lbs.

BEST INVESTMENT WE EVER MADE, SAYS DRIVER-OWNER

"We simply inserted the POWER SEAL per instructions and made no other repairs or adjustments. Compression readings were taken before and after and showed a big improvement in both cars. As a result the engine gained a lot more pick-up and power which was especially noticeable on hills. What impressed us most was the sharp reduction in oil consumption. In one cab, we've actually been saving a quart a day and figure we have saved $11.20 on oil alone since the POWER SEAL was applied a month ago. In the other cab, oil consumption was cut practically in half. We have also been getting better gas mileage. All in all, POWER SEAL turned out to be just about the best investment we ever made. It paid for itself in two weeks and has been saving money for us ever since, to say nothing of postponing the cost of major overhauls that would have run into real money." *Town Taxi, Douglaston, N.Y.*

SEND NO MONEY!

Simply send the coupon and your Power-Seal injection will be sent to you at once C.O.D. plus postage and handling charges. Or, to save the postage and handling charges, simply enclose full payment with the coupon. For 6-cylinder cars order the Regular Size, only $4.95. For 8-cylinder cars order the Jumbo Size, $7.95. Power-Seal is now available only by mail from us. Send the coupon at once.

RUDSON AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRIES, Dept. DA-5
400 Madison Ave., New York 17, N. Y.

Please send me ..... tubes of the amazing new POWER SEAL.
☐ Regular Size, for 6-cyl. cars, $4.95 ☐ Jumbo Size, for 8-cyl. cars, $7.95
On arrival, I will pay the postman the price indicated above plus postage and delivery charges. I must see an immediate improvement in the pep and power of my car, less oil consumption, greater gas mileage, reduced engine noise, easier starting, faster pickup, within 30 days, or you will refund my full purchase price.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... Zone..... State.....

☐ Save More! Send cash, check, or money order with coupon and we pay all postage charges. Same money-back guarantee.

FREE FOR ASTHMA

If you suffer with attacks of Asthma and choke and gasp for breath, if restful sleep is difficult because of the struggle to breathe, don't fail to send at once to the Frontier Asthma Company for a FREE trial of the FRONTIER ASTHMA MEDICINE, a preparation for temporary symptomatic relief of paroxysms of Bronchial Asthma. No matter where you live or whether you have faith in any medicine under the sun, send today for this free trial. It will cost you nothing.

FRONTIER ASTHMA CO. 300-W FRONTIER BLDG.
462 NIAGARA ST. BUFFALO 1, N. Y.

GIRLS

GET YOUR MAN

and make him yours FOREVER. Why take chances against other women who may be using mysterious charms? Here is your chance to learn and use Secrets of Sex Appeal so powerful that even bad women can keep good men while good girls go without.

HOW TO WIN AND HOLD A HUSBAND

contains the very essence of confidential advice that a great Love and Marriage Expert has given to thousands of women—all reduced to a simple set of rules—an easy formula that you can learn to use to WIN YOUR MAN. 10-DAY TRIAL—Just send your name and address today and on delivery deposit only $2 plus postage with your postman. (Or send $2 with order to save C.O.D. and postage.) Use for 10 days. I positively GUARANTEE that you will be more than delighted or your money back promptly and no questions asked. Order At Once.

LARCH, 118 East 28, Dept. 441-B, New York 16

DRINK

Can Be Conquered! Are any of your dear ones or yourself under the spell of DRINK? If they are and if you believe GOD CAN HELP YOU, send your name and address for full INFORMATION about our wonderful NEW WAY to help you UNDERSTAND and STOP the DRINK HABIT either in one you love or in yourself. What this is doing for others it can as surely do to help YOU! So don't delay! Just clip this message now and mail with your name and address. We will rush our wonderful NEW Message to you by AIR MAIL, absolutely FREE. Hope House, Desk 6210, Norcton, Conn.

COMPLETE SONG WRITING SERVICE

We write the music for your words without charge on 50-50 basis. We send you records, copies and copyright your song for you in Washington, D. C.

GUARANTEED PUBLICATION

We guarantee the publication of at least two songs each month by a legitimate B.M.I. music publisher. The writers receive advance royalty and a standard royalty contract. The publisher pays all publication expenses.

WHAT ARE YOUR CHANCES?

If you have ability your chances are good. Now song-writers become famous every year. Maybe this is YOUR year. Publishers are constantly on the lookout for good songs. Turn your material over to a firm whose business is SONGWRITING.

WRITE TODAY

SEND YOUR POEM or lyric today for free examination and complete information on our exceptional offer.

Dept. K-11, 1609 Vista Del Mar, Hollywood 28, Calif.

HOLLYWOOD TUNESMITHS

Steele stopped and raised in the saddle to look out over the brush. A man hiding here would be plumb tempted to start himself a little fire. Not much of a blaze, just enough to warm himself over by sitting almost in the coals.

Suddenly Steele's eyes picked out a thin plume of gray rising from the thickets a couple of miles away. The warmth of excitement momentarily replaced the wintry coldness in him. Of course, it probably wasn't Hook Clancy over there, but then... Swiftly he spurred ahead.

A couple of hundred feet from where the wet-looking smoke was coming from the brush he lit down and tied his pony to a manzanita. Then, silently, he strode ahead.

As he drew closer he went down on his belly and wriggled to where he could watch the camp-fire. The eagerness flowed out the chinks of his courage as he saw the blaze was almost dead, and that there was no trace of saddle or soogans. Still, he went cautiously as he threaded the jungle into the small clearing.

Signs of a recent meal stared back at him beside the dirt-sprinkled coals. He sighed, wondering which way to turn now. There would be hoof-marks somewhere nearby...

IN THE next moment he swung around as a low chuckle sounded in back of him. Guns in hand, Hook Clancy stood just within the clearing.

He was saying: "If it ain't the law! Last time I seen you, I rec'lect you were the jasper with the guns, 'stead o' me."

"Pretty smart," Steele levelled at him. "Kickin' dirt in your fire and dragging your soogans away at the first sign of trouble." His gaze flashed over the outlaw's thin figure, and what he found colored his eyes with scorn. This was the man he had relied on! If ever

[*Turn To Page* 88]

THOUSANDS ARE ENJOYING

Rollicking BEDSIDE FUN

. . . and You will too when You possess "the *Pleasure Primer*"

The Ideal Playmate

HERE'S entertainment for open minds and ticklish spines. Here's lusty, merry recreation for unsqueamish men and women. Here's life with apologies to none. Collected, selected from the best there is, this zestful Primer is an eye-opener for the inexperienced; wisdom for designing; merriment for all. It is guaranteed to make the lassies giggle and he-men erupt in boisterous bellyfuls.

Here is no refuge for the strait-laced or satisfaction for the morbid. Served in a highly inviting manner, this pleasureful Primer is a blueprint for uninhibited living. Call it a gay evening's entertainment or an ideal bedside companion, you'll dally over its contents time and time again.

ENJOY IT 10 DAYS FREE!

You are invited to examine the Pleasure Primer 10 days at our expense. It is guaranteed to please or your purchase price will be refunded at once!

Plaza Book Co., 109 Broad St., N.Y.4, N.Y.

TEN DAY TRIAL OFFER

PLAZA BOOK CO., DEPT. P-7311
109 Broad St., New York 4, N. Y.

Please send THE PLEASURE PRIMER on 10 day trial. If I'm not pleased, I get my purchase price refunded at once.

☐ Send C.O.D. I'll pay postman 98c plus postage.
☐ I enclose $1. You pay all postage.

Name .....

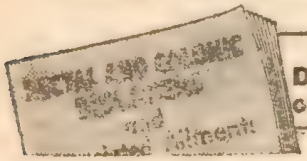
Address .....

City .....Zone.....State.....

FISTULA

Is Too Often Dangerous

FREE BOOK — Explains Causes, Effects and Treatment



Avoid Dangers of Delay

Sufferers from Fistula, Piles and other rectal and colon troubles should write for a new 160 page FREE BOOK on these ailments. Fully illustrated with charts and X-ray pictures. Write today—McCleary Clinic and Hospital, 1125 Elms Blvd., Excelsior Springs, Mo.

DICE • CARDS

Perfect Dice, Magic Dice, Magic Cards - READ THE BACKS—Inks, Daubs, Poker Chips, Gaming Layouts, Dice Boxes, Counter Games, Punchboards. WRITE FOR CATALOG TODAY.

K. C. CARD CO. 852 So. Wabash Ave. Chicago, Ill.

Send us your song poems for free examination. Let us help you in your song writing effort. All rejected material returned if accompanied by self addressed stamped envelopes.

NATIONAL SONG SERVICE

2054 West Polk St. Chicago 12, Ill.

She Was Blessed with LONG HAIR!

YET, This Beautiful Girl Once Had Her Worries, Her Sleepless Nights

Dryness had set in causing brittle hair ends to break off—often much faster than hair will grow. Thus in a matter of time shorter and shorter hair! With horror she discovered the havoc dryness was causing her once beautiful long hair—that feminine charm we all know is our most valuable possession.

MAKE EASY 7-DAY TEST

See for yourself in your own mirror in 7 days or less these improvements. New hair appearance of beauty, lustre, softer, smoother, glorious. That so often leads to Love and Romance.

SEND NO MONEY—Guaranteed

Just try the Juelene System on your hair. Then let your mirror prove the results. Juelene comes in 2 forms: ☐ Regular ☐ Extra. Send for it today. Only $1, plus Shipping, Government charges. (Triple Size $2.) It is fully guaranteed. Money back if not delighted. Order now!

JUEL CO., 1735 W. 5th St., Dept. E-526 Brooklyn 22, N.Y.

NEW BOOKLET

"Why Women Fall For Men"

For Adults Only

Send 25¢ In Coin To

JEANDELL, 807 Liberty Blvd., Minquadale, Del.

a man carried the Owlhoot stamp, it was Clancy. Vulture-faced, dirty, lean to the point where he was whang-leather and bone, he slouched there in the sand with his guns held low and unwavering before him.

"You didn't ride plum out here to find me, did you?" the gunslammer sneered. "Hell, you're a long way from home, Lawman; this's Mexico you're in!"

"But there's no bounds around the law I'm ridin' for," Steele said. "My business is more or less personal. Didn't we have a deal of some sort on?"

"Yeah—with you linin' out the terms!" the longrider snarled.

"And who came out on the long end of it?" Steele gave back harshly, ignoring the ugly lift of the forty-fives. I swapped you a hoss and a headstart for a promise. You've still got the nag and you ain't swinging yet—but you haven't kept the promise."

"You didn't think I would!" Clancy marveled. "Hell, I figgered you had ideas that might put shells in my gun. Seein' the way the wind lay. I chimed in with my two-bits worth and made you feel better about springin' me, as well as not doin' myself any harm. Far as seeing you kill Benton goes—I didn't know but what it was suicide!"

The sheriff went rigid. The one thing that was most obvious of all,

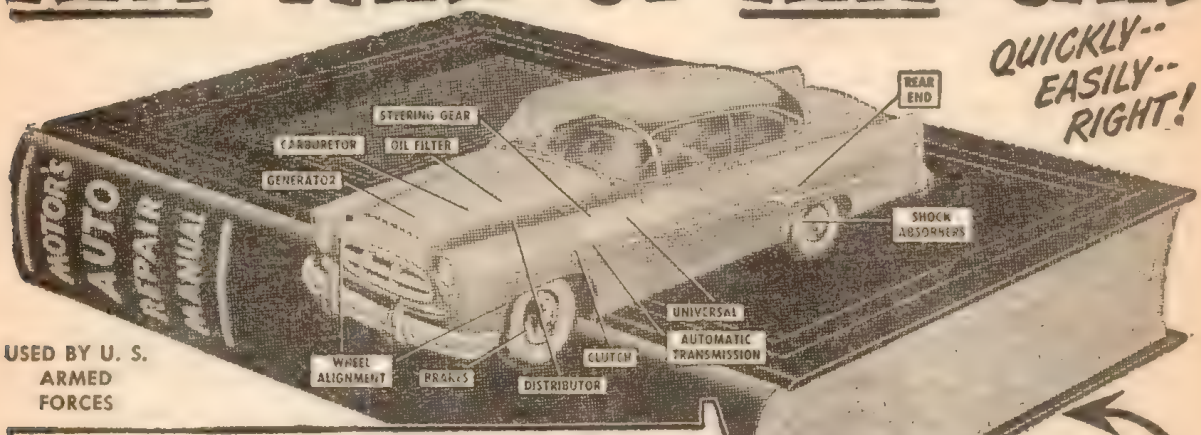
[*Turn To Page 90*]

HOW TO FIX

Brakes, Clutches, Transmissions, Rear Ends, Carburetors—*Yes,*

ANY PART OF ANY CAR

QUICKLY-- EASILY-- RIGHT!



USED BY U. S. ARMED FORCES

NOW—Whether You're a Beginner or an Expert Mechanic —You Can "Breeze Through" ANY AUTO REPAIR JOB! MOTOR'S BIG BRAND-NEW AUTO REPAIR MANUAL Shows You HOW — With 2950 PICTURES AND SIMPLE STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS.

Free 7-DAY TRIAL
Return and Pay Nothing If Not Satisfied

COVERS EVERY JOB ON EVERY CAR BUILT FROM 1940 THRU 1954

YES, it's easy as A-B-C to do any "fix-it" job on any car whether it's a simple carburetor adjustment or a complete overhaul. Just look up the job in the index of MOTOR'S New AUTO REPAIR MANUAL. Turn to pages covering job. Follow the clear, illustrated step-by-step instructions. Presto—the job is done!

No guesswork! MOTOR'S Manual takes nothing for granted. Tells you where to start. What tools to use. Then it leads you easily and quickly through the entire operation!

Same FREE Offer On MOTOR'S Truck and Tractor Manual

Covers EVERY job on EVERY popular make gasoline truck, tractor made from 1946 thru 1954. FREE 7-Day Trial. Check proper box in coupon.

Over 2,950 Pictures! So Complete, So Simple, You CAN'T Go Wrong!

BIG BRAND-NEW REVISED Edition. Covers everything you need to know to repair over 685 chassis models—*including ALL 1954 CARS.* ONE THOUSAND giant pages, 2,950 "This-Is-How" pictures. Over 290 "Quick-Check" charts — more than 22,598 essential repair specifications. Over 225,000 service and repair facts. Instructions and pictures are so clear you *can't* go wrong!

Even a green beginner mechanic can do a good job. And if you're a topnotch mechanic, you'll find shortcuts that will amaze you. No wonder this guide is used by the U. S. Army and Navy! No wonder hundreds of thousands of men call it the "Auto Repair Man's Bible"!

Meat of Over 140 Official Shop Manuals

Engineers from every automobile plant in America worked out these time-saving procedures for their own motor car line. Now the editors of MOTOR have gathered together this wealth of "Know-How" from over 140 Official Shop Manuals, "boiled it down" into crystal-clear terms in one handy indexed book!

Try Book FREE 7 Days

SEND NO MONEY! Just mail coupon! When the postman brings book, pay him nothing. First, make it show you what it's got! Unless you agree this is the greatest time-saver and work-saver you've ever seen —return book in 7 days and pay nothing. Mail coupon today! Address: MOTOR *Book Dept., Desk 47L, 250 West 55th St., New York 19, N. Y.*

Covers 685 Models—All These Makes

Buick	Ford	Nash
Cadillac	Frazer	Oldsmobile
Chevrolet	Henry J	Packard
Chrysler	Hudson	Plymouth
Crosley	Kaiser	Pontiac
De Soto	Lincoln	Studebaker
Dodge	Mercury	Willys

Many Letters of Praise from Users

"MOTOR'S Manual paid for itself on the first 2 jobs, and saved me valuable time by eliminating guesswork."
—W. SCHROP, Ohio

He Does Job in 30 Min.—Fixed motor another mechanic had worked on half a day. With your Manual I did it in 30 minutes."
—C. AUBERRY, Tenn.

MAIL COUPON NOW FOR 7-DAY FREE TRIAL

MOTOR BOOK DEPT.
Desk 47L, 250 W. 55th St., New York 19, N. Y.

Rush to me at once (check box opposite book you want):

☐ MOTOR'S New AUTO REPAIR MANUAL. If O.K., I will remit $2 in 7 days, $2 monthly for 2 months and a final payment of 95c (plus 35c delivery charges) one month after that. Otherwise I will return the book postpaid in 7 days. *(Foreign price, remit $9 cash with order.)*

☐ MOTOR'S New TRUCK & TRACTOR REPAIR MANUAL. If O. K., I will remit $2 in 7 days, and $2 monthly for 3 months, plus 35c delivery charges with final payment. Otherwise I will return book postpaid in 7 days. *(Foreign price, remit $10 cash with order.)*

Print Name..... Age.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

☐ Check box and save 35c shipping charge by enclosing WITH coupon entire payment of $6.95 for Auto Repair Manual (or $8 for Truck and Tractor Repair Manual). Same 7-day return-refund privilege applies.

MEN OVER 40

ARE YOU GROWING OLD TOO YOUNG?

Do You Tire Easily—Suffer Aches and Pains Not Experienced a Few Years Ago?

It may surprise you to know that many symptoms of old age are caused by simple glandular inflammation. Medical Science, in continuous studies, has learned much about glandular inflammation which may cause middle aged men to have a worn out feeling—suffer bothersome aches and pains, urinary trouble and loss of physical vigor and vitality.

YOUR FUTURE IS BRIGHTER!

Today, the future for many of these men is brighter because of new methods of medical treatment. Doctors can do much to prevent and relieve pain and prevent permanent disability. However, treatment should be rendered promptly to prevent more serious complications.

Men who complain regularly of a general run-down condition and unusual aches and pains should learn more about their condition immediately. You may learn that peace of mind, a liking for people, a zest for living, physical vigor and mental alertness can still be yours.

The Kansas City Clinic has just published a very informative booklet on the subject which may save you years of suffering, as well as add years to your life. Write for your FREE copy today. No obligation. This booklet is ABSOLUTELY FREE. Just send name and address to: Dept. B-9, The Kansas City Clinic, 920 Oak St., Kansas City 6, Mo.

IT MAY WORK MIRACLES FOR YOU-NOW...

If life passes you by, if you can't overcome EVIL SPIRITS, if you have BAD LUCK, if you FAIL in love, feel LET DOWN and people are AGAINST you, THEN you need this 24K GOLD PLATED HOLY MIRACLE CROSS, encrusted with beautiful SIMULATED DIAMONDS and fully ENCLOSED in GLASS. Can be used in the secrecy of your home. It is said that people swear by it and BLESS the day that they bought it. Don't be afraid to let it work for you. 100% guaranteed or your money back in 7 days. ONLY $2.00 money with order OR $2.50 C.O.D. GET STARTED on the right road today...

FREE WITH EVERY ORDER, A VIAL OF HOLY MIRACLE ANOINTING LIQUID. FULL DIRECTIONS.

TWINZ, 125 Broad St., N.Y. 4, N.Y. Dept. DO-4

he had overlooked. He had lived in hell, out of loyalty to this double-dealing polecat. That thought started as a tiny match-flame and flared up until it was a roaring fire of hatred in his brain. The trail ahead of him suddenly became plain.

He held his voice down to a deadly whisper as he flung his challenge. "That deal we made ain't closed yet, amigo. You still stand in the debit side on my books. But I'm writin' you off now—with lead!"

His guns were halfway out of leather before the surprised gunslammer could tug the triggers of his peacemakers. His shoulder leaped to the hot agony of a rending, soft-nosed bullet, but stronger than that pain was exhilaration more buoyant than any he had ever known. Whatever his debt to society for that killing, he was erasing it now.

His consciousness was detached from his bullet-shocked body as he watched the belching forty-fives in Clancy's hand. He laughed aloud at the grim business the longrider made of rocking the hammers of his guns. He was oblivious to the hard, sledge-hammer blow of a slug in his side. The blasting concussions of the Colts and the bite of powdersmoke in his eyes and nose was a combination that filled him with reckless joy.

Hook Clancy reeled from a bullet high in his chest. Sweat was on his bearded jowls from a new fear that came to him. He had faced blazing

guns before; but not in the hands of a man who had been hit twice and could still laugh and swear. His hands trembled as he steadied himself and tried to center his wavering sights on the blood-flecked badge.

Steele let his guns pause for a second. Then they both roared at once, two bellows of gun-sound atop each other. The shots tore through the gunman's middle, breaking him at the waist. He held his fire after that, watching Hook Clancy go down, his guns exploding once more. The broken gunslammer lay with his cheek shoved into the sand and his legs doubled up, looking just like any other rat who got overconfident once too often.

Steele heard himself saying, "This is the way it ought to be. Lawmen and owlhooters just don't make good pards in any deal. But thickheaded jackass that I am, it took a lot to learn me that!"

HE FOUND strength, after he had wadded rags into his clean-drilled wounds, to throw the dead outlaw over his horse. It was a long ride back, but he knew that not even Satan himself could stay him from finishing the job. For though he had never been so weak in body, he had never been stronger in spirit.

He rode back into the dreary thickets with his grim burden. There was a warmth flushing his body which laughed at the aching cold of the air. He was going back, to tell them the whole story, and let them draw their own conclusions.

And somehow Steele knew they wouldn't be half so quick to condemn him as he had been himself....

★

EXTRA MONEY
Selling EXCLUSIVE PARAGON Cushion Shoes
Even If Now Employed

Enjoy your own lifetime, secure, independent shoe business—without investment. Steady demand and repeats. Up to $4.00 pair advance commissions. Big bonus. Latest smart styles, top quality, heel-to-toe cushion. Complete line. It's easy to start. Write for FREE OUTFIT today!

PARAGON SHOE COMPANY
79 Sudbury St., Dept. 10, Boston 14, Mass.

"With God All Things Are Possible!"

Are you facing difficult problems? Poor Health? Money or Job Troubles? Unhappiness? Drink? Love or Family Troubles? Would you like more Happiness, Success and "Good Fortune" in Life?

If you have any of these Problems, or others like them, dear friend, then here is wonderful NEWS of a remarkable NEW WAY of PRAYER that is helping thousands to glorious new happiness and joy!

Just clip this Message now and mail with your name, address and 3c stamp to LIFE-STUDY FELLOWSHIP, Box 6210, Noroton, Conn. We will rush this wonderful NEW Message of PRAYER and FAITH to you by AIR MAIL absolutely FREE!

SUCCESS

Do you want POWER, Love, Money, Health, Happiness? The true way to mastery will open for you when you know how to ask for and how to accept the gifts that GOD has stored up for those that love and obey Him. Learn

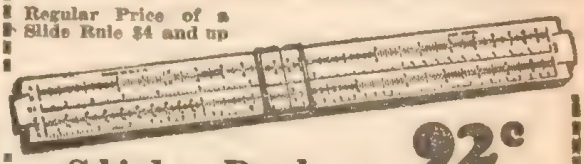
THE MAGIC FORMULA for SUCCESSFUL PRAYER

Here are some of the amazing things it tells you about: when to pray; where to pray; how to pray; The Magic Formulas for Health and Success through prayer for conquering fear through prayer; for obtaining work through prayer; for money through prayer; for influencing others through prayer; and many other valuable instructions that help you get things you want.

5-DAY TRIAL—SEND NO MONEY

Just send your name and address today and on delivery simply deposit the small sum of only $1.49 plus postage with your postman. I positively GUARANTEE that you will be more than delighted with RESULTS within 5 days or your money will be returned promptly on request and no questions asked. Order At Once.
LARCH, 118 E. 28, Dept. 641-A, New York 16

Regular Price of a Slide Rule $4 and up



Slide Rule

92c and this coupon
Add 3¢ Postage

If you know how to use a pencil you can use a slide rule. For bookkeepers, accountants, salesmen (figuring commissions, cost, etc.), farmers, housewives, etc. For Armed Forces highly important. Men's most useful tool. Easy to calculate instantly. Multiplying, proportions, division, extracting roots, etc. "High Vision" Clear View Slide. Full 10" Rule. A, B, C, D, CI and K scales. FREE 28-page instruction book on how to get correct answers instantly without pencil or paper.

Gene Loewy, 545 5th Ave., N. Y. 17
Dept. 53-P Limit three rules to each coupon

Build a Fine BIG MONEY Jacket and Shoe Business

TOP MEN MAKE $5 to $10 AN HOUR — YOU DON'T INVEST A CENT — SALES OUTFIT FREE!

REAL SHEEPSKIN LINING! DOUBLE PROFITS WITH SPECIAL 2-IN-1 COMBINATION SALES!

Start a big money business without investing a cent! Make up to $84 extra a week on just 3 sales a day in spare time—much more for full time! You take orders for fast-selling warm leather jackets and popular Velvet-eez Air-Cushioned shoes that are Nationally-famous for special comfort features. Make two sales at one time by showing these special combinations that keep you warm from top to toe: rugged jacket of Horsehide leather lined with wooly fleece, and to match: top quality work shoes also lined with real Sheepskin. Show such extra features as Air-Cushion innersoles that let you "walk on air"—Neoprene air-resisting soles. Think of all the people in town who will buy these from you!

NOT SOLD IN STORES—Our shoes and jackets are not sold in stores. People must buy from YOU. Start by selling to friends, relatives, people where you work. Outdoor workers around home will stuff your pockets with cash: truck drivers, milkmen, postmen, gas station men, construction men, etc. Complete line includes jackets of Horsehide leather, fine Capeskin leather, soft suede, Nylon, Gabardine, 100% Wool; raincoats, too! Special features include fleece, quilted, rayon linings—non-scuff leathers—fur collars... And look at the "shoe store" business you'll have! You offer 160 different styles for men, women ... dress, sport, work shoes. You actually feature more shoes in a greater range of widths and sizes than any store in your town! No need to substitute ... customers get the exact style, size and width they order. No wonder ambitious men earn up to $200 and more EXTRA income a month!

GET STARTED NOW! SEND FOR *FREE* OUTFIT! Send coupon TODAY! I'll rush your powerful Jacket and Shoe Selling Outfit. It includes Air-Cushion Demonstrator, everything else you need to start making BIG MONEY the first hour!

MASON SHOE MFG. CO. Dept. MA-440, Chippewa Falls, Wis.

Send for FREE Outfit!

MR. NED MASON, Dept. MA-440
MASON SHOE MFG. CO.
Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin

You bet I want to build a fine BIG MONEY Jacket and Shoe Business! Please rush my Free Selling Outfit so I can start earning cash profits from the first hour!

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

TOWN.....STATE.....

The Trading Post

(*continued from page 8*)

miles from camp, a small herd of buffalo was encountered. Perkins, taking the two visitors with him, cut up over a draw to flank the animals. They succeeded in killing two of them. When they stampeded, the other four trappers rode in among them, killing four cows. Two of the trappers remained to skin the buffalo, and to cut out the choice meat to be hauled to their camp. The remainder of the party went on.

Finding bear tracks, they followed them to a cottonwood grove, leaving one man to care for the horses, and leaving the two visitors in choice positions from which to shoot. Perkins and Williams circled the grove to see if the bears had left it. There being no tracks out, they entered the woods and found three bears, killing one, the other two stampeded in the direction of the two tenderfeet. They soon heard shots and rushed out from the woods to ascertain the results. Both bears had been wounded; one was rolling on the ground, the other was charging the two dudes who, in their excitement, had forgotten to reload their guns.

Williams was yelling at them. "Ding bust 'er, shoot the critter afore she rips yore hide of'n ye."

Perkins, sensing their predicament, shot the bear just in time to save the two from being severely mauled.

Williams was angry, and did a lot of cussing at the two. "Dawg-gone, ye orto hev known enough to keep yore

[*Turn To Page* 94]

Stop Smoking in 7 Days

SMOKERS, BEWARE! LUNG CANCER! HEART DISEASE. More than 95% of those who get lung cancer are smokers. Also, cigars and pipes (as well as cigarettes) can produce cancer of the lip, mouth and tongue. Also, smoking can cause heart attack.

BREAK THE HABIT SAFELY, EASILY with the Caldwell Complete Tobacco Cure. No harmful or nasty drugs. No strain on your will power. All you do is follow the simple instructions. Like magic, your present *will to smoke* is transformed into a *will to stop smoking.* You're through with tobacco, even if you've smoked 20 or 30 years. Try the CALDWELL COMPLETE TOBACCO CURE without risk. Send $1.98 and save postage. Or pay postman $1.98 plus postage. Money-back guarantee.

PLAZA PRODUCTS, Dept.W5711 • 109 Broad St., New York 4, N. Y.

No Safety in Filters, etc.

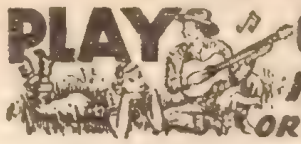
Don't depend on filters, king size, or denicotinized cigarettes. They let through enough nicotine and tars to do serious damage. Remember, it's your heart, your lungs!

Lovely used DRESSES

10 for 4.95

The biggest bargains we have ever offered. Prints, solids, rayons, cottons, etc. Assorted styles and colors. Sizes 10 to 18. 10 for $4.95. Larger sizes 6 for $4.95. Some of these dresses were worth up to $30.00 when new. Send $1 deposit, balance C.O.D. plus postage. Your $4.95 refunded if dissatisfied, or merchandise exchanged, if desired. Many other clothing bargains for entire family.

POSTCARD BRINGS FREE CATALOG
Buy with confidence at
ALLIED MAIL ORDER CO., INC., Dept. 107-H
162 CHRISTOPHER AVE., BROOKLYN 12, N. Y.



PLAY GUITAR IN 7 DAYS OR GET MONEY BACK

Let Ed Sale, top Radio Guitarist, teach you to play a song the very first day, and any song by ear or note in 7 days! His famous book contains 52 photos, 87 chord charts, etc. Shows how to tune, keep time, build chords, bass runs dance chords, swing, etc., plus 110 Popular Songs, words and music. Surprise friends, relatives. Popularity and fun galore. SEND NO MONEY! Just name and address to Ed Sale and pay postman $1.98 plus C.O.D. postage (or send $2 with order and I pay postage. Same guarantee).

ED SALE Studio 3009 BRADLEY BEACH, N. J.

"How I Became A Hotel Hostess"

Patricia O'Connor Becomes Social Director Though Without Hotel Experience

"Words just can't tell how glad I am I enrolled for Lewis Training. I found teaching a difficult task, the hours long and the income uncertain. After graduating from the Lewis Course, their Employment Bureau placed me as Social Director of a New York hotel. The work is enjoyable and I have a good income. I owe everything to Lewis Training."

"How I Stepped Into a BIG PAY Hotel Job"

Harold L. Beals Becomes Resident Manager As A Result of Lewis Training

"Through the years I worked at many different occupations—but none offered the substantial future I longed for—until I took the Lewis Course. I have been employed by a catering company as Accountant and Assistant Manager. Now I have accepted a Resident Manager's position with an excellent salary plus a bonus of 10% on the profit."

STEP INTO A WELL-PAID HOTEL POSITION

Important positions, increasing opportunities await trained men and women in glamorous hotel, motel, club, and institutional field. Lewis graduates "making good" as hostesses, managers, executive housekeepers and 55 other well-paid positions. Previous experience proved unnecessary. "Over 40," no obstacle. Lewis Training quickly qualifies you at home in leisure time or through resident classes in Washington. FREE book describes this fascinating field. It tells how you are registered FREE in Lewis National Placement Service. Mail coupon today!

Approved for ALL Veteran Training

LEWIS HOTEL TRAINING SCHOOL
Room XS-2561, Washington 7, D. C.

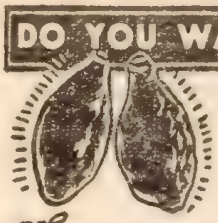
39th SUCCESSFUL YEAR

Send me, without obligation, your Free Book. I want to know how to qualify for a well-paid position.
☐ Resident Training ☐ Home Study

Name .....
PLEASE PRINT NAME AND ADDRESS
Address .....
City ..... Zone ..... State .....
☐ Check here if eligible for Veteran Training

Now for the first time we are able to offer you GOLD and SILVER colored GENUINE, LIVE, HIGHLY MAGNETIC LODESTONES, said to bring GOOD LUCK IN LOVE, MONEY and GAMES OF CHANCE and to CHASE EVIL, BAD LUCK and JINXES. We sell them as curios only. No supernatural claims made. With every pair of GENUINE GOLD and SILVER colored LODESTONES, we will send you FREE of extra charge, a SPECIAL RED FLANNEL CARRYING BAG and a so-called GOOD LUCK SEAL. Only $1.98 for all four items. SEND NO MONEY. Just pay postman $1.98 plus postage. GUARANTEED to please you or your money back. Save postage by sending $2 in cash or money order. Same Guarantee. ACT FAST. SUPPLY LIMITED.
SURPRISE GIFT WITH EVERY ORDER
Beatty's, Dept. A-3801, Box 408, Mineola, N. Y.

DO YOU WANT LUCK?



These so-called HIGH JOHN the CONQUEROR GOOD LUCK ROOTS are high quality EUROPEAN roots. Many superstitious people carry two of these roots on them at all times. One for LUCK in MONEY affairs, LOVE & GAMES OF CHANCE. The other to CHASE EVIL BAD LUCK, Jinxes and unwanted things. We sell them as curios only. No supernatural claims made. Sent in a plain package with a bottle of alleged FAST LUCK OIL and a special RED FLANNEL CARRYING BAG and a GOOD LUCK SEAL. SEND NO MONEY. Pay postman only $2.98 plus a few cents postage for all 5 items GUARANTEED to please you or your money refunded. Save postage by sending $3 cash or money order. Same GUARANTEE. GIFT WITH EVERY ORDER.
Beatty's, Dept. D-3801, Box 408, Mineola, N.Y.

SENSATIONAL alleged LUCKY COMBINATION

This is the combination they're all talking about. ALEXANDER's sensational lucky package, containing FAST LUCK SACHET, MONEY DRAWING OIL, GOOD LUCK SEAL, SUCCESS POWDERS INCENSE, HI JOHN THE CONQUEROR ROOT and the alleged LUCKY HAND ROOT. Everything in the SPECIAL RED FLANNEL CARRYING BAG. THIS IS IT. SEND NO MONEY. JUST SEND YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS. (This is a value over $7.00). BUT ALL YOU PAY IS $4.98. NOT A CENT MORE. PAY WHEN YOU GET EVERYTHING IN A SEALED WRAPPER. WRITE NOW. This sensational combination comes to you fully GUARANTEED to please you or your money back. Don't Delay! Write Today! SURPRISE GIFT WITH EVERY ORDER.

CONCENTRATE ON
LUCK
MONEY
LOVE

BEATTY'S, Dept. B-3801, Box 408, Mineola, N. Y.

guns loaded; allus keep 'em loaded, even when yer sleepin'."

The two visitors had learned their lesson, and promised that it wouldn't happen again. That night at camp, the trappers agreed that if there were any Indians in the country, they would have been attracted by the day's shooting, in which case they might expect an attack some time before morning. So they turned in fully dressed. With guns handy, they were ready for action should trouble come.

EARLY the following morning, the trappers were aroused by their their dogs' barking. Rushing for the corral, they found seven Indians trying to get at their horses. After a short skirmish, two of the Indians were killed, while the other five got away. Two of the trappers received arrow wounds; one in the cheek, the other in the thigh. With five of the Indians getting away, that meant trouble for the trappers. A council of war was held, and it was decided that none of the Indians must be allowed to escape to carry the news of the location of their camp back to the tribe, for if they did, a larger force was sure to come.

At daybreak, ten of the trappers and the two dudes mounted and took up the trail. A quarter mile from camp, they found blood stains, indicating that one of the surviving Indians had been wounded. A short distance beyond, it was joined by the trail of the other four who had stopped to help the wounded one to his feet.

Being well mounted, the trappers pressed upon the trail of the Indians who were on foot. Their tracks led towards a large clump of willows growing along a shallow gulch.

Not wanting to ride into an ambush, the trappers circled the willows. Arriving on the other side, they found that only four of the Indians had come out.

This could mean but one thing; the wounded one was still there. Two of the trappers dismounted and entered the grove intent on killing the Indian before trailing down the other four. A few minutes later, they came back. They had found the Indian propped up against a stump wrapped in a blanket. The Indian had bow and arrow ready, and the trappers had approached him so stealthily that they had been able to dispatch him with their knives before he had time to let out a yell.

It was now established that the Indians were Blackfeet, which made the trappers more determined than ever to overtake the other four. The war-like Blackfeet were savage fighters who would fight anyone; if not against the whites, then against some neighboring tribes.

Williams, who was with the party, spoke up. "Reckon sure as shootin', that's what they will be aimin' to do afore long."

Speeding up, they followed the trail towards Pryor Gap. As they approached a ridge over which the trail led through deep snow, two scouts were sent ahead to see if the quarry was in sight. When the scouts returned, they reported that the Indians were on a high butte some three or four hundred yards over the ridge, and were clearing the snow away with the evident intention of making a smoke signal. That made it necessary for the trappers to surround the butte, and attack before the fire could be built.

Discarding their coats, blankets, and all things not needed in the fight to come, they spread out and approached the butte from opposite sides. At first, the Indians saw only one of the approaching parties. Crouching behind a tree, one of the Indians fired, but missed his target, and was killed by return fire. One of his followers, crawling out to reach for his gun, was also killed by the trappers' fire.

[*Turn Page*]

To People
who want to write but can't get started

Do you have that constant urge to write but fear that a beginner hasn't a chance? Then listen to what the former editor of Liberty said on this subject:

"There is more room for newcomers in the writing field today than ever before. Some of the greatest of writing men and women have passed from the scene. Who will take their places? Fame, riches and the happiness of achievement await the new men and women of power."

N.I.A. Wins Him Salary Rise

"I am in labor relations, and I do the 'Life' and 'Look' type of picture stories for the company magazine. Shortly after enrolling in N.I.A., I received a written commendation and a salary increase for the 'Human relations' value of my stories." —A. W. Henning, 1128 Vine St., St. Charles, Mo.

Writing Aptitude Test — FREE!

THE Newspaper Institute of America offers a FREE Writing Aptitude Test. Its object is to discover new recruits for the army of men and women who add to their income by fiction and article writing. The Writing Aptitude Test is a simple but expert analysis of your latent ability, your powers of imagination, logic, etc. Not all applicants pass this test. Those who do are qualified to take the famous N. I. A. course based on the practical training given by big metropolitan dailies.

This is the New York Copy Desk Method which teaches you to write by writing. You develop your individual style instead of trying to copy that of others. Although you work at home, on your own time, you are constantly guided by experienced writers. You "cover" actual assignments such as metropolitan reporters get. It is really fascinating work. Each week you see new progress. In a matter of months you can acquire the coveted "professional" touch. Then you are ready for market with greatly improved chances of making sales.

Mail the Coupon NOW

But the first step is to take the FREE Writing Aptitude Test. It requires but a few minutes and costs nothing. So mail the coupon now. Make the first move towards the most enjoyable and profitable occupation — writing for publication! Newspaper Institute of America, One Park Ave., New York 16, N. Y. (Founded 1925)

(Licensed by State of New York)

Free

Newspaper Institute Of America
One Park Ave., New York 16, N.Y.

Send me without cost or obligation, your free **Writing Aptitude Test** and further information about writing for profit.

Mr. }
Mrs. } .....
Miss }

Address .....

City ..... Zone ..... State .....

(All correspondence confidential. No salesman will call on you.)

☐ Check here if Veteran. 31-T-664

Copyright 1953 Newspaper Institute of America.

Investigator Training

Experience unnecessary. Many opportunities. Send for Free particulars. Also credentials. EXCHANGE SECRET SERVICE SYSTEM, 4360 Broadway, Chicago 13, Ill.

Trans-World Clothing Inc.
184 Christopher Av., Dpt. 201-A, Brooklyn, N.Y.

Want the thrill of making someone do exactly what you order? Try hypnotism! This amazing technique gives full personal satisfaction. You'll find it entertaining and gratifying. HOW TO HYPNOTIZE shows all you need to know. It is put so simply, anyone can follow it. And there are 24 revealing photographs for your guidance. Includes complete directions for party and stage hypnotism.

SEND NO MONEY

Ten days' examination of this system is offered to you if you send the coupon today. We will ship you our copy by return mail, in plain wrapper. If not delighted with results, return it in 10 days and your money will be refunded. Stravon Publishers, Dept. H-599, 43 West 61st St., New York 23, N. Y.

MAIL COUPON TODAY

STRAVON Publishers, Dept. H-599
43 W. 61st St., N. Y. 23, N. Y.
Send HOW TO HYPNOTIZE in plain wrapper.
☐ Send C.O.D. I will pay postman $1.98 plus postage.
☐ I enclose $1.98. Send postpaid.
If not delighted, I may return it in 10 days and get my money back.

Name_____
Address_____
City_____ Zone_____ State_____
Canada & Foreign—$2.50 with order

DOUBLE ACTION WESTERN

In the meantime, three of the trappers had approached unseen by the Indians, to within fifty yards of the butte's north side. They saw the two remaining Indians looking back towards where the shooting had occurred, and taking a bead on them, they killed both of them. A short time later, the trappers took the back trail with their scalps and plunder.

CLOSE GUARD was maintained at the camp for several days. Only when the wind had drifted the snow over their trail, and there were no sign of Indians, did they relax. Sometime later, the two visitors expressed a desire for buckskin suits like the ones the mountain men were wearing. As the best suits were made from the skins of mountain sheep, it would mean a hunt into the deeper interior of the mountains to get the material for the suits. Williams agreed not only get the skins but also to make the suits stating he was the only "dawg-gone tailor in the outfit."

Six of the trappers, in company with the two dudes, started off for the hunt, taking with them two dogs trained in the hunting of mountain sheep. The dogs would run to the high-points and hold the sheep until the hunters could get within range. After a two-day hunt, they had killed fifteen of the animals, and bringing the skins back to camp, they were turned over to the wives of four of the mountain men. When the hides had been fleshed, grained, and freed of the hair, they were tanned, oiled and smoked. With that done, they were ready to be made into suits for the two visitors.

On February 6th, 1849, eight trappers and the two visitors started off were several large camps of Indians on a three-day hunting expedition over near the Wolf Mountains. When they reached the southwest end of the Wolf range, their scouts reported that there were several large camps of Indians

[*Turn To Page 98*]

IF IT SLIPS... IF IT CHAFES... IF IT GRIPES... THEN

THROW AWAY THAT TRUSS!

Why put up with days . . . months . . . YEARS of discomfort, worry, and fear—if we provide you with the support you want and need? Learn NOW about this perfected truss-invention for most forms of reducible rupture. Surely, you keenly desire . . . you eagerly CRAVE to enjoy most of life's activities and pleasures once again. To work . . . to play . . . to live . . . to love . . . with the haunting fear of Rupture lessened in your thoughts! Literally *thousands* of Rupture sufferers *have* entered this *Kingdom of Paradise Regained* . . . have worn our Appliance without the slightest inconvenience. Perhaps we can do as much for you. Some wise man said, "Nothing is impossible in this world"—and it is true, for where other trusses have failed is where we have had our greatest success in many cases! Even doctors—thousands of them—have ordered for themselves and their patients. Unless your case is absolutely hopeless *do not despair*. The coupon below brings our Free Rupture Book in plain envelope. Send the coupon now.

Patented AIR-CUSHION Support Gives *Wonderful Protection*

Think of it! Here's a surprising yet simple-acting invention that helps Nature support the weakened muscles gently but securely, day and night. Thousands of grateful letters express heartfelt thanks for relief from pain and worry,—results beyond the expectations of the writers. What is this invention—how does it work? Will it help me? Get the complete, fascinating facts on the Brooks Air-Cushion Appliance—send now for *free* Rupture Book.

Cheap—Sanitary—Comfortable

Rich or poor—ANYONE can afford to buy this remarkable, LOW-PRICED rupture invention! But look out for imitations and counterfeits. The Genuine Brooks Air-Cushion Truss is never sold in stores or by agents. Your Brooks is made up, after your order is received, to fit your particular case. You buy direct at the low "maker-to-user" price. The perfected Brooks is sanitary, lightweight, inconspicuous. Has no hard pads to gouge painfully into the flesh, no stiff, punishing springs, no metal girdle to rust or corrode. It is GUARANTEED to bring you heavenly comfort and security,—or it costs you NOTHING. The Air-Cushion works in its own unique way, softly, silently helping Nature support the weakened muscles. Learn what this marvelous invention may mean to you—send coupon quick!

C. E. BROOKS, Inventor

SENT on TRIAL!

No . . . don't order a Brooks now—FIRST get the complete, revealing explanation of this world-famous rupture invention, THEN decide whether you want to try for the comfort—the wonderful degree of freedom—the security—the blessed relief thousands of men, women and children have reported. They found the answer to their prayers! And you risk nothing as the complete Brooks is SENT ON TRIAL. Surely you owe it to yourself to investigate this no-risk trial. Send for the facts now—today—hurry! All correspondence strictly confidential.

FREE! Latest Rupture Book Explains All!

SENT YOU IN PLAIN ENVELOPE **JUST CLIP and SEND COUPON ➡**

Brooks Appliance Co., 327-F State St., Marshall, Mich.

PROOF!

Read These Reports on Reducible Rupture Cases

(In our files at Marshall, Michigan, we have over 52,000 grateful letters which have come to us entirely unsolicited and without any sort of payment.)

Never Loses a Day's Work in Shipyard

"A few weeks ago I received the Appliance you made for me. I put it on the afternoon I received it and wouldn't do without it now. My fellow workers notice how much better I can do my work and get around over these ships—and believe me, the work in a Navy shipyard is anything but easy. You have been a life saver to me. I never lose a day's work now. One of my buddies was ruptured on the job about two months ago. After seeing my Appliance he wants me to order him one." J. A. Comer, 1506 Green Ave., Orange, Texas.

Perfect Satisfaction in Every Way

"I am happy to report that the Appliance that I received from you more than a year ago has given perfect satisfaction in every way.

"In fact, I am not sure I will ever need another one, but I am asking you to send me the best grade as marked on the order blank, then if I should ever need it I would have it. I think I would want to use it when I go for long walks or work at heavy work of any kind, just for protection."—H. M. Herron, Mouthcard, Ky.

MAIL THIS COUPON NOW!

BROOKS APPLIANCE CO.
327-F State St., Marshall, Mich.

Without obligation, please send your FREE BOOK on Rupture, PROOF of Results, and TRIAL OFFER—all in plain envelope.

Name .....

Street .....

City ..... State .....

State whether for Man ☐ Woman ☐ or Child ☐

hunting buffalo in the valleys of the Tongue River and Goose Creek. They at once decided that it would be much too dangerous for them to do any hunting in that vicinity, so the hunt was abandoned, and the party returned to their Pryor camp.

On their way to camp, they ran into a large herd of buffalo grazing along the Big Horn River. The two dudes wanted to kill some of the animals, but as the hills were swarming with Indians, the trappers prevented them from doing so, stating that there was plenty of meat at their camp, and it would be much too risky.

On February 15th, the trappers broke camp, and started for the south fork of the Stinking water for their spring trapping. The trip requiring two days' travel; scouts roaming ahead of the party reported the country free from Indians. The following week, while in camp on the Stinking water, a band of fifty Crow Indians under Chief White Bear visited them, trading and feasting. The twenty-seven white men formed a party too strong to attack. On February 24th, the trappers started to move camp, but had gone only eight miles when they were stopped by forty mounted Indians standing in a row across the trail. It was chief White Bear's band, but without the chief. Spreading out, the trappers sat their horses with their guns pointing at the Crow warriors. The trappers had no intention of permitting a few Crows to halt their progress. The chief rode out from the timber just in time to avert a fight. He no doubt figured that the twenty-seven guns meant twenty-seven dead warriors, which would be too high a price to pay. Dead warriors were no good to him, so he rode off, leaving the trappers in peace.

Before reaching Graybull Creek, the trappers met Chief Washakie of the friendly Shoshones and his band on their way to hunt buffalo. Later in camp at Bull Lake, the buckskin suits for the dudes were completed by Ned Williams. They offered to pay Williams, but he would have none of it.

While camping by the lake, five Indians attacked the men herding the horses and got away with six head, and at the same time wounding Jack Perkins. The other herder, Fred Dauglas, yelled at the horses who had been trained to run for camp when any untoward noise was heard. All horses, with the exception of six head the Indians had cut out, ran for camp. As a precautionary measure, horses were kept saddled close at camp, and seven fully-armed trappers took up the chase.

In a running fight they killed the Indians, and recaptured their horses. One of the horses was fatally wounded, however, and had to be shot. Perkins, who was wounded, was in a bad way for a time, but the two easterners who knew something about surgery and medicine, nursed him back to health and full recovery.

The party eventually camped at the forks of Green River. Here they met five trappers who had come from Fort Bridger. They gave them their first news of the Mexican War, and the discovery of gold in California. The twenty-five trappers and the two dudes stopped at Bovey's Green River Post where they traded their pelts for gold and other supplies needed.

Done with their trading, they headed off again, and on March 25th, they reached Fort Bridger. The two easterners just had time to catch a wagon-train headed for Independence, Missouri. The trappers gave them many presents, and they in turn forced upon the mountaineers three times as much as any service rendered was worth. The trappers split up. Eight of them decided to head for California to take part in the gold digging. They crossed the mountains and plains on horseback, and arrived at Hangtown, California, just in time to celebrate the fourth of July, 1849.

★

WHAT Every AUTO MECHANIC Wants to Know

A motor vehicle is a machine of many parts, each part designed and constructed for its own special function.
All good mechanics, like good doctors, should know the working theory and operation of each part and understand what causes trouble and how to remedy it.

LET AUDELS AUTO GUIDE SOLVE YOUR PROBLEMS

Every auto mechanic, helper, serviceman and operator can use a copy of AUDELS AUTOMOBILE GUIDE. The information it gives saves time, money and worry. Highly indorsed by all users. It presents the whole subject of auto mechanics from A to Z in plain language and simple terms.
This Big Practical Book gives full information with working diagrams covering the principles, construction, ignition, service and repair of modern cars, trucks and buses.
A complete Guide of 1800 pages, with over 1500 illustrations showing inside views of the working parts, with instructions for service jobs. **Diesel engines, Fluid and Hydra-matic drives fully explained.**

IT PAYS TO KNOW HOW TO

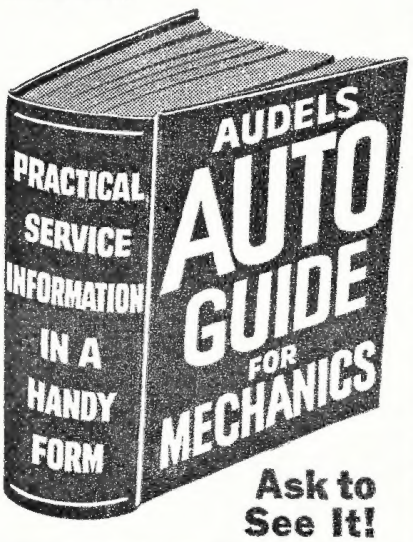
How to fit pistons—How to locate engine knocks—How to fit connecting rod bearings—How to service main bearings—How to recondition valves—How to time valves—How to adjust fan belts—How to adjust carburetors & chokes—How to rebuild a clutch—How to service automatic transmissions—How to service brakes—How to adjust steering gear—How to cope with ignition troubles—How to service distributors—How to time ignition—How to "tune up" an engine.

INFORMATION IN A HANDY FORM

73 INTERESTING CHAPTERS—*Read this partial list of subjects on which practical information is fully given for quick reference under the headings as shown below. Ready Reference Index.*

All Parts of an Automobile—Automotive Physics—The Gas Engine—Gas Engine Principles—Multi-Cylinder Engines—Horse Power—Automobile Engines—Stationary Parts—Moving Parts—Pistons—Piston Rings—Connecting Rods—Crank Shafts—Valves—Valve Gear—Cams and Cam Action—Valve Timing—Cooling Systems—Fuel Feed Systems—Dual Fuel Feed—Mixture—Carburetors—Carburetor Service—Automatic Choke—Super-Chargers—Transmissions—Special Transmissions—Fluid and Hydra-matic Drives—Clutches—Universals and Propeller Shafts—The Differential—Rear Axles—Rear and Front Suspension—Running Gear—Brakes—Wheel Alignment—Knee Action—Steering Gear—Tires—Lubricants and Lubrication—Automotive Electricity—Ignition Systems—Magneto Ignition—Spark Plugs—Ignition Coils—Distributors—Automatic Spark Control—Ignition Timing—Generators—Starters—Generator and Starter Testing—Lighting Systems—Storage Batteries—Charging and Testing—Diesel Engines and Trouble Shooting.

A Ready Reference



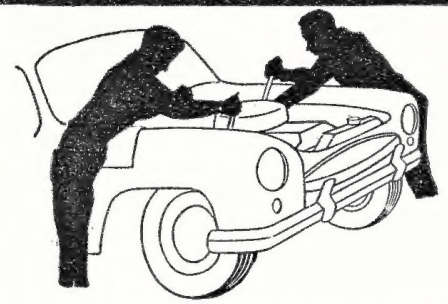
Ask to See It!

7 DAYS' FREE TRIAL

TO GET THIS ASSISTANCE FOR YOURSELF SIMPLY FILL IN AND MAIL COUPON TODAY.

$4 COMPLETE PAY $1 A ONLY MO.

AUDEL, Publishers, 49 W. 23 St., New York 10, N.Y.



O. K. SAY READERS • • • • •

"Well Worth the Price" "SAVED ME $50"
"Most Useful and Complete"
"It has my Highest Recommendation"
"The Best Money can Buy"
"Easy for the Mechanic to Understand"

Sent on 7 Days Approval

Step up your own skill with the facts and figures of your trade. Audels Mechanics Guides contain Practical Inside Trade Information in a handy form. Fully illustrated and Easy to Understand.
Highly Endorsed. Check the book you want for 7 DAYS FREE EXAMINATION.
Send No Money. Nothing to pay postman.

CUT HERE

MAIL ORDER

AUDEL, Publishers, 49 W. 23 St., NEW YORK 10, N. Y.

Please send me postpaid for FREE EXAMINATION books marked (x) below. If I decide to keep them I agree to mail $1 in 7 Days on each book or set ordered and further mail $1 monthly on each book or set until I have paid price, otherwise I will return them.

☐ TRUCK & TRACTOR GUIDE, 1299 Pages	$ 4
☐ AUTOMOBILE MECHANICS GUIDE, 1800 Pages	4
☐ DIESEL ENGINE MANUAL, 575 Pages	2
☐ MACHINISTS HANDY BOOK, 1650 Pages	4
☐ WELDERS GUIDE, 400 Pages	1
☐ BLUE PRINT READING, 416 Pages	2
☐ MATHEMATICS & CALCULATIONS, 700 Pages.	2
☐ SHEET METAL PATTERN LAYOUTS, 1100 Pages	4
☐ SHEET METAL WORKERS HANDY BOOK, 388 Pgs.	1
☐ MECHANICAL DRAWING GUIDE, 160 Pages	1
☐ MECHANICAL DRAWING & DESIGN, 480 Pages	2
☐ AIRCRAFT WORKER, 240 Pages	1
☐ TELEVISION SERVICE MANUAL, 384 Pages	2
☐ RADIOMANS GUIDE, 914 Pages	4
☐ ELECTRONIC DEVICES, 216 Pages	2
☐ ELECTRIC MOTOR GUIDE, 1000 Pages	4
☐ ELECTRIC WIRING DIAGRAMS, 272 Pages	1
☐ ELECTRICIANS EXAMINATIONS, 250 Pages.	1
☐ ELECTRIC POWER CALCULATIONS, 425 Pages.	2
☐ HANDY BOOK OF ELECTRICITY, 1440 Pages.	4
☐ ELECTRIC DICTIONARY, 9000 Terms	2
☐ ELECTRIC LIBRARY, 7000 Pages (12 Book Set)	18
☐ MARINE ENGINEERS HANDY BOOK, 1258 Pgs.	4
☐ SHIPFITTERS HANDY BOOK, 250 Pages	1
☐ REFRIGERATION & Air Conditioning, 1280 Pgs.	4
☐ MILLWRIGHTS & MECHANICS GUIDE, 1200 Pgs.	4
☐ POWER PLANT ENGINEERS GUIDE, 1500 Pages	4
☐ ENGINEERS & FIREMANS EXAMS, 525 Pages	1
☐ PUMPS, Hydraulics & Air Compressors, 1658 Pgs.	4
☐ ENGINEERS LIBRARY (3 Book Set)	9
☐ MECHANICAL DICTIONARY, 950 Pages	4
☐ GARDENERS & GROWERS GUIDES (4 Book Set)	6
☐ CARPENTERS & BUILDERS GUIDES (4 Book Set)	6
☐ PLUMBERS & Steamfitters Guides (4 Book Set)	6
☐ MASONS AND BUILDERS GUIDES (4 Book Set)	6
☐ PAINTERS & DECORATORS MANUAL, 450 Pgs.	2
☐ HOUSE HEATING GUIDE, 1000 Pages	4
☐ OIL BURNER GUIDE, 384 Pages	1

Name_____

Address_____

Occupation_____

Employed by_____ HAM

Take These Exciting MYSTERIES

WORTH $19 FOR $1

IN PUBLISHER'S EDITIONS

WITH MEMBERSHIP IF YOU JOIN NOW

HARD BOUND FULL SIZE NEW BEST-SELLERS

THE SEVEN BEST NEW MYSTERIES OF THE SEASON — ALL YOURS IN ONE GIANT PACKAGE!

Here's an amazing bargain offer to new members—ALL SEVEN brand new best sellers worth $19 in publisher's editions for ONE DOLLAR!

A POCKET FULL OF RYE
by Agatha Christie

About a rich old man, his ardent young bride, and murder set to a fantastic pattern! Can you discover it? Pub. ed. $2.75

ROGUE COP
by William P. McGivern

Police Sgt. Carmody was smart, but crooked. Then the "mob" killed his kid brother—and set off an explosion that rocked the city! Publ. ed. $2.75

FOCUS ON MURDER
by George H. Coxe

After photographer Stacy was murdered, his apartment was ransacked by two desperate society girls—who HAD to find Stacy's file of private photos! Publ. ed. $2.75

THREE MEN OUT
by Rex Stout

Murder and terror at the World Series...with clues in the FIELDING ERRORS and BASE HITS! Nero Wolfe at his best. Publ. ed. $2.50

THE TAMING OF CARNEY WILDE
by Bart Spicer

Aboard the Dixie Belle you'll find food, comfort, beautiful women—and a fellow passenger bent on MURDER. Publ. ed. $2.75

THE WHISTLING SHADOW
by Mabel Seeley

After your son dies, you find his secret wife and take her home. Then you discover that someone wants to FRIGHTEN her to DEATH! Publ. ed. $2.75

NO LOVE LOST
by Margery Allingham

Two spine-tingling new novels of violence and misdirected passion in one large volume. Publ. ed. $2.75

Get all SEVEN — Mail this coupon NOW!

THE DOLLAR MYSTERY GUILD, Dept. DAG-11, Garden City, N. Y.

Please enroll me in the Dollar Mystery Guild and rush me these new books worth $19.00 in publisher's editions. Later, I'll send only $1.00 (plus shipping) for the entire package.

ENROLLMENT BONUS — 7 FULL-SIZED BOOKS for $1.00
A POCKET FULL OF RYE - ROGUE COP - FOCUS ON MURDER
THREE MEN OUT - THE TAMING OF CARNEY WILDE
THE WHISTLING SHADOW - NO LOVE LOST

New book bargains will be described to me each month in the Club's advance bulletin, "Mystery Guild Clues." The purchase of additional selections at only $1.00 each (plus few cents for shipping) is entirely voluntary on my part. Whenever I don't want a book I will notify you, and it won't be sent. I need take only four selections a year — and I may resign any time after accepting four selections. **NO-RISK GUARANTEE: If not delighted, I can return books in 7 days and membership will be cancelled.**

NAME .....
(Please Print)

Street and No. .....

City ..... Zone ..... State .....

(Same offer in Canada; Address Dollar Mystery Guild, 105 Bond Street, Toronto 2, Ont. Good only in U.S.A. and Canada.)

IMAGINE getting ALL the books pictured above for just a dollar with enrollment! Here is how your Mystery Guild membership works: Each month the editorial board selects two top-notch new books—often by authors like Rex Stout, Ellery Queen and Agatha Christie. These are described to members well IN ADVANCE. You take only those you like; no more than four a year if you wish. If you don't want a book, simply tell the Club. It will not be sent. You pay postman nothing; bills are due only after you examine your selections.

These latest novels cost $2.50 to $3.00 in the publisher's editions. **But members pay only ONE DOLLAR each (plus few cents shipping) for their hard bound, large-sized volumes!**

Best of all, if you join NOW, you get SEVEN new books worth $19.00 for ONE DOLLAR as an enrollment premium! Send coupon today.